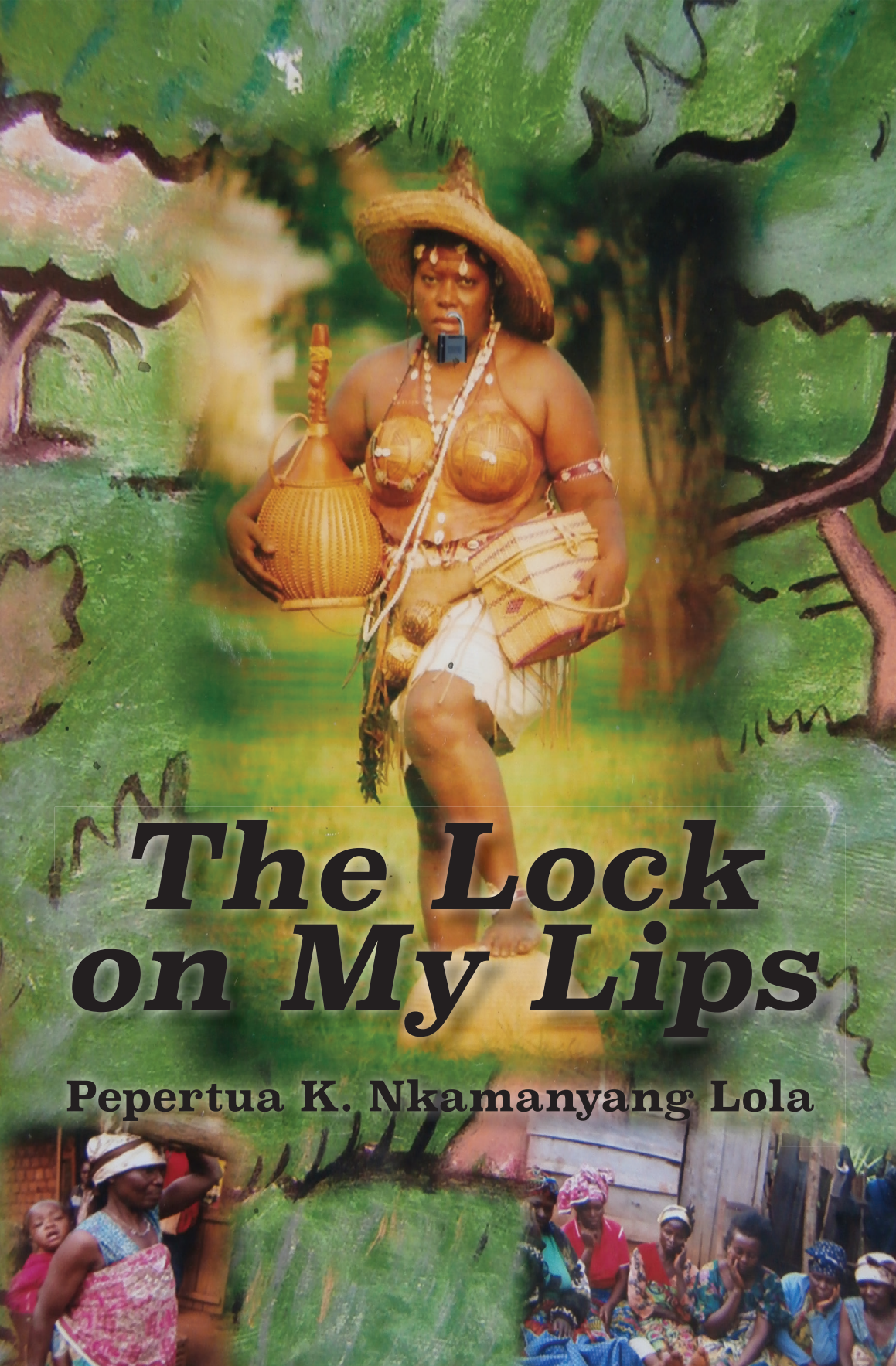




The Lock on My Lips

Pepertua K. Nkamanyang Lola

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Dedication

For Prof. Dr Ansgar Nunning:

For stirring and deepening my insight in Interdisciplinary Studies,
specifically in the ways linguistic representations “emerge” from,
“travel”, “marry”, “negotiate”, “construct”, “shape” and “challenge”
the very cultures from they originated; and

For introducing me into the ways literary texts become sites of
cultural intersections and battles, all of which have been instrumental
in widening the choice and scope of context-sensitive issues explored
in this study.

The Playwright

Perpetua Nkamanyang Lola is a Senior Lecturer of English Literary Studies and Literary Theories at The University of Bamenda, Cameroon. She had served as Organization and Research Documentation Officer in Justus Liebig University, Giessen, Germany, and is presently Head of Service for Extra-African Cooperation at The University of Bamenda, and First Deputy Mayor of Mbiame Council. Lola earned her Bachelor's degree, Diplomes D'études Approfondies (DEA), and a Master's degree from the University of Yaounde 1, and an outstanding Ph.D degree in Literary and Cultural studies from the University of Justus Liebig in Giessen, Germany (2008). Since 2007, she has been associated with the Giessen Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC). Lola has been lecturer at the University of Douala (2000-2013) where she served as Head of English Section and Coordinator of Post-Graduate Programs of the English Section (2008-2013). Her research interests are in the areas of: narrative and culture, identity, postcolonial narratology, poetry, gender/feminist studies, and interdisciplinary/travelling concepts. She is presently working on a Literary oriented Interdisciplinary Research Methodology based project which she envisages as a foundation for the eventual introduction of Interdisciplinary theories and methods of teaching, interpretation and analysis of the relationship between Literary texts and their contexts of production in the Department of English.

Lola's local and International Publications include: "Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis; A Study in Cosmic Dynamism" (2005); Forms and Functions of Narration and Focalization in Some Selected Poems of Lord Byron: A Narratological Analysis, (<http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/frontdoor.php?source-opus=7477@la=de>), and "The Education of Women in Science and Technology: The Case Study of the Institute of Technology of the University of Douala". "Towards a Postcolonial Narratology: A Reconceptualization, and Analysis of Narrative Voice and Narrative Perspectives in a Selection of Cameroon/African Narratives in English", "[En]gendering Narration: Narratological Conceptualization and Analysis of Mediacy in Zaynab Alkali's The Virtuous Woman and Osman Conteh's Unanswered Cries", "Literature and Reunification Through National

Symbols: What way Forward”, have been reviewed pending publication. She has attended and presented Conference papers at the national and International Levels.

Preface & Acknowledgment

I would like to thank the University of Douala for their financial support in the realization of this project. As a writer, one imaginatively reproduces environments and influences in a language that is environmentally alert and receptive. My opinion that writers are readers and reapers implies that I do not wish to arrogate the autonomy of the entire process of production of this work to my lone mind. Of course, thinkers acquainted with the ‘interdisciplinary research of the late 1960s, and its optimism on the benefits of traveling across disciplinary borders’ (Nunning, 2000: 345) will definitely agree with Nunning’s stirring declarations on the need to swing away ‘from the hampering synchronic intellectual blocks’ to ‘diachronic’ and context-sensitive investigations that can articulate a range of ‘unresolved issues’ in representations, and ‘open up very fertile areas of investigation’ for literary and interdisciplinary studies. In the same line of thought, issues of narration, mental strategies, law, citizenship, gender, feminism, ethnicity, identity and human rights raised in this work may prove useful grounds for forging inter-connections between literature and contexts.

My undying gratitude goes to an intellectual baobab-Prof. Dr. Ansgar Nunning (of the University of Giessen in Germany) who has continued to teach me that the role of a teacher continues outside the classroom. The effusive emission of erudite acumen his mental volcano continues to ejaculate in lines of print, and gifts of updated books on a wide range of subjects in literary and interdisciplinary studies have contributed immensely to fertilize the mind that gave birth to this budding initiative. Whether or not the proximity of the sun to the seed is close enough for the later to merit germination and escape death remains an open question. It is however believed that this humble attempt may contribute to trigger off interpretations within and beyond the boundaries of literary and cultural studies including drama.

With regards to its origin, growth and mutation, this play text has evolved through several stages involving creeping, staggering and limping. Hopefully, the manure it receives will facilitate its germination. My greatest thanks go to the following resourceful scholars for their invaluable interventions. Professor Nkengasong of the University of Yaounde 1 did a marvelous job in providing the most needed expertise, advice on structuring and useful suggestions for improvement. The United States based theater Director; Professor J. K Bannavti made some very helpful suggestions on the need to improve on character depiction and also the theatrical and structural elements of the play. To him, I owe a lot of thanks for making me learn that writing a play means more than just creating characters and putting thoughts and words into their minds and mouths respectively. I further owe a debt of appreciation to Musa Wirtum, who helped with linguistic expertise and suggestions on structuring; and to Professor Njikam Savage, Glory Lankar, Jumbam Hermen and Fred Kwaye for proofreading the work in its manuscript version. The work also received further suggestions and constructive criticisms in its subsequent stages of metamorphosis from Dr Nforbin Gerard to whom I owe a huge debt of gratitude for noticing some of the errors that strayed into the work unnoticed.

This work, by its very nature, was the result, not of design, but of an attempt to answer the question “who is a woman?” In the hope that it may be worthy enough to appeal to readers of all ages, I would like to thank my soul mate-Clement Achiri Nkamanyang not only for painstakingly going through the manuscript to reduce unnecessary emphasis; but also, for a gender biased provocative joke that eventually became the foundation from which the work emerged. He unconsciously lit the flames that provoked the effusive eruption of my mental lava in my attempt to write my own history, in my own words. My children: Fombu Junior Grodjinovski Nkamanyang and Ngambam Maclouski Nkamanyang deserve a special place for their love and ceaseless questions and arguments. Despite his tender age (10), Ngambam fed my imagination with endless interrogations on domestic power and authority that eventually constituted part of the

message in the play text. My Mother, Kfekfe Mary, who never stopped hunching over ridges and furrows to keep the family alive is remembered.

Special thanks are due Peter Lola, who made a number of fundamental suggestions on legal and environmental issues; to Lola Orlando and Yonkwa Ephesian for their stimulating suggestions and anthropological proverbs which I have incorporated into the work. Women who venture to step where my mother feared to tread (Malala Yousafzai, Aung Saa suu, Mother Theresa, Angela Merkel, Sirleaf Ellen Johnson, Hilary Clinton, Dorothy Njeuma, etc have distinguished themselves in different areas of life), have immensely inspired me.

I would like to thank the voices I have heard, the inward and outer sources of my mind, the Philanthropist, and “Peace Crusader”- Ntumfor Barrister Nico Halle whose community driven and media activities have inspired me; and the books that have continued to feed my imagination. I am thankful to Ndikum Evelyn for typing parts of the manuscript. Finally, I give thanks to the Almighty God for his gift of energy and loving kindness.

Any semblance of names and places is pure coincidence. I am solely responsible for any shortcomings in the play. If I have failed to deploy contexts and tools that may serve as necessary parameters for studying the dramatic genre as a whole, I would be grateful for any comments, criticisms or suggestions for improvement. I am hopeful that your contributions can spare the play from critical stings. Please, write to me at: lolaperps@yahoo.com

Perpetua Nkamanyang Lola

Foreword

The fight for women's rights continues to be a major issue amongst feminist scholars, writers and activists since Mary Wollstonecraft. While it must be admitted that major grounds have been covered over the decades and women are seen more and more to be very efficient partners in development and not just subordinates or people who provide existential whims for men, women in most parts of the world are still yoked to some resistant cultural practices which prevent them from benefiting or exercising their full human rights.

Feminism today has developed in a number of ways, representing different political, social, religious, moral, educational and cultural aspirations and the arguments and controversies have equally taken varied dimensions including Marxist, psychoanalytical, Eco critical, postmodernist, and cultural critical perspectives. The different dimensions and controversies of course, indicate the fact that the fight for women's rights is an important issue affecting humanity and which has become the concern of not just women but equally men. But what seems to create a rift in a compromising stand is perhaps the fact that theoretical considerations and criticism infringe on cultural norms of the different peoples of the world. This is the hallmark of the controversy in feminism when some cultures claim some sort of cognitive and ethical absolutism.

In the early reception of feminism in Africa, most African feminist scholars and writers thought that equal rights for men and women meant the implantation of radical western models on African societies and cultures. The result was of course, the gradual visible wreckage of African families as well as African culture and social order. But as time went by, positions began to change and African feminist scholars and critics began to realize the danger of embracing foreign ideologies without checks and balances. Today, African feminism seeks to institute the rights of women without necessarily dismantling the cultural framework of which the woman is an important stakeholder. Rather, the problem today is to eradicate

fossilized cultural practices which hinder women from effectively performing their roles.

This is the position which Perpetua Nkamanyang Lola takes in her very scintillating play, *The Lock on My Lips*. In writing the play she refuses to take extremist positions which are the flaw of most feminist writers. Rather, she seeks to reconcile conflicting ideas and opinions between husband and wife, tradition and modernity, men's rights and women's rights, darkness and light, among others, masterminded by her main character, a powerful model of a woman, who shows immutable respect for her husband and the culture of the people but who is also intransigent in the fight for her rights through the power of humility and polite yet subtle rationalization.

The serious didactic value of the play cannot be overemphasized. It is a play in which conflicting opinions and ideas are put on the table and debated upon; an important contribution to the age-long controversy, an insurmountable crusade for women's rights, and a good instrument for raising awareness about the right modes of living with one another.

Professor John Nkemngong Nkengasong
Writer and Critic

Characters

Shey Ghamogha:	Husband to Mrs. Ghamogha, frustrated politician, traditional Prime Minister with a Priestly title, Member of the Council of Elders
Mrs Ghamogha:	Wife to Shey Ghamogha, educator, women's rights activist
Bame:	First son to Shey and Mrs. Ghamogha
Fomu:	Son to Shey and Mrs. Ghamogha
Kila:	Daughter to Shey and Mrs. Ghamogha
Ability (Mvem Wangiri):	One-time Military Officer discharged on moral grounds and leader of Kibaaka Vigilante Group
Tarhnteh:	First Assistant Counsellor in <i>Kibaaka</i> Municipal Council; member of the Council of Elders and Quarter Head
Hon S Wirkitum:	Honourable Shey Wirkitum, Honourable Member of Parliament, Member of the Council of Elders, Hybrid and worker with the Revenue Department
Shufai Nsaw:	Lineage head and Chief Judge in the Council of Elders
Shufai Sarbam:	Lineage head and Second in Command in the Council of Elders
Hallen Shelley Johnson:	Barrister, and Counsel for the Plaintiff Counsel for the Plaintiff; and a Legal Consultant
Barrister Simon:	Barrister, and Counsel for the Defendant
Presiding Magistrate	
Inspector Lucas:	Local Police Inspector
Court Registrar	

Regular:	Elder sister to Mrs. Ghamogha; frustrated Graduate, divorced
Nkferkibu:	Member of the Council of Elders
Tav Banboye:	Member of the Council of Elders
Taa Gheh:	Member of the Council of Elders
Baa Medzefen:	Member of the Council of Elders
Nyuydze:	Member of the Council of Elders
Siveria Nyuydze:	Wife to Nyuydze
Secretary:	Secretary to Barrister Hallen Shelley Johnson
Lukong:	Old man
Verdzekov:	Messenger in the Council of Elders
Venkika:	
Dinka:	
Mbiame:	
Biy Wiiba:	A <i>Come no Go</i> and active member of MANDJARA Association
Taata	
Biiywong:	Wife to Mvem, now living in separation
First Man	
First Woman	
Kilamakwah:	Member of Vigilante group.
Nchiylav:	Messenger
Agnes (Aginir):	Concubine to Shey Ghamogha

Judges, Secretaries, Clerk, Town Crier, Police Officers, Elders,
Villagers, Audience, Vigilante group, Woman, Women, Messengers.

The Prologue

Everything Lives and Dies in Language

Life swarms beyond the restrictions of sight,

Life springs and blossoms outside lines of print.

Life sprouts and germinates in untrodden oceans,

Life blooms and takes roots inside streams of thoughts.

Life sails beyond carved and engraved boundaries,

Why then become a slave to sight?

Feed the famished.

And tap the less tapped.

Where my voice cannot reach, this budding effort should do it for
me.

If you must convince the eyes that there is something beyond its
threshold, challenge them to look into the mind, and not only at the
face.

ACT I

Scene I

Shey Ghamogha's Sitting-room

Shey's photograph and family picture each hang on the wall. In the centre of the sitting room is an imposing interwoven cane chair with a broad-shouldered and umbrella-like platform that provides an impression of a house within another. The house seems deserted except for a dark-skinned giant sitting on the biggest of the cane chairs flanked by smaller ones arranged around it, and looking at the wall clock at short intervals. He is wearing a zebra-coloured thick gown touching his feet and a matted cap on his head on which is stuck a red feather. His eyes look starved. He lifts up his head; stares blankly, walks across the room and prop himself up against the window. He opens the window, shades his eyes from the rays of light invading the room through the window with the flat fingers of his right hand; fixes a hunting gaze across the yard towards the small footpath that leads in and away from his compound; sighs, returns to the middle of the floor, and lowers himself onto the cane chair. Tiny rows of ridges interspersed with folds and furrows can be seen creeping along his forehead above the eyes as he sits with his chin sustained on his right hand. He calls his children over to where he is sitting).

Shey Ghamogha: Your mother disappeared from bed at cock crow. Where could she possibly be?

Bame: *Baa*, I saw *mami*...

Shey Ghamogha: *(Cuts in)*. When?

Bame: It was still too dark. I saw a small fire burning at the top of the stick she held in the hand *(Kila nods)*.

Shey Ghamogha: Did you say you saw a fire?

Bame: Yes *baa*. It gave a little light and burnt out. She even went in and came out with a torch. I saw her flashing the torch into the dark.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Interrupts)*. What were you doing outside at that time?

Bame: Kila wanted to have a piss but was afraid of the dark. I saw somebody like Mami Biy Wiiba (*Kila nods*).

Shey Ghamogha: (*Stares ahead, open mouthed, and speaks*). She's becoming a man.

Kila: There are no hairs on her chin.

Bame: *Baa*, what has *Mami* done again?

Shey Ghamogha: (*Thunders*). Your mother is the reason why I am a husband and father but not a man. Do I have to increase the size of your eyes before you can see the extent of damage your mother has caused my standing in *Kibaaka*? (*Fomu nods. Shey continues*). Bame, Fomu. My red feather is shaky on my cap. Authority threatens to desert me. As if your mother hasn't wrecked sufficient havoc on my manhood, she left the house at night without my knowledge.

Bame: *Baa*, is there a problem?

Shey Ghamogha: Bame, Fomu, you need to know what is happening because you will also take over the responsibility of your own households when you become husbands and fathers. There's something I've never told you before. I had to wait until you are big enough to clear up your mess. Your mother's attitude has precipitated it (*coughs and continues*). Before my father's death, I worked hard to become the Parliamentarian of my community. I sold all the goats and pigs I was rearing in order to raise money for my campaign project. Before I knew it, a *Come no Go* walked into my plantation and harvested all my supporters. It didn't end there. He became a threat. His greatest campaign tool was misinformation about Michael Ghamogha. I couldn't sit and

watch an intruder weed me out of my own farm just like that.

Fomu: *Baa*, was he aware that you are a traditional priest?

Shey Ghamogha: Money determines who is right and who is wrong. My challenger was wealthy and highly connected; and presented me to the hierarchy of the party as a threat. I was dragged behind the bars.

Fomu: Behind the bars? (*Bame and Fomu exchange surprise glances*).

Shey Ghamogha: Yes. I sold the only stretch of farmland my father gave me to secure my freedom from jail. I lost everything in the fight.

Fomu: What did you do?

Shey Ghamogha: (*Shakes his head*). Staying in *Kibaaka* and without land constantly reminded me that I was a husband and father but not a man. I became a job hunter. I trudged through thick forests till I found myself in the coast where I was employed as a Head Man in the Banana Plantation.

Bame: Where was *Mami*?

Shey Ghamogha: She had just graduated from the School of Communication in Walaba. She worked for (*trying to remember*) *emebr*- Rural Women Forum shortly before the Association moved to Kenyama. I couldn't release my wife to go and work in a strange land. She lost the job and joined me in the coast where she worked briefly as a reporter with KRTV, and later as a teacher with the Christian Mission.

Bame: *Baa*, why did *Mami* abandon teaching?

Shey Ghamogha: They usually received January salaries in July.

Bame: Why did you abandon your job in the

plantation?

Shey Ghamogha:

I worked very hard but earned teaspoon salary. We usually received the first instalment of our January pay in April. The workers lived on crumbs of irregular teaspoon wages. But, I was determined to raise money and buy land in *Kibaaka*. We formed a Labourers Union and started protesting against irregular payment of teaspoon salaries. We wanted the Assistant Manager to carry our voices to the White skin man who had bought the Banana Plantation from the Head Quarters. We only wanted the Heavy Weight to understand that we didn't measure the services we rendered in teaspoons. Something happened. We were thrown out of the company.

Fomu:

Thrown out? How?

Shey Ghamogha:

I lost my job. I lost the last speck of hope I had clutched onto.

Fomu:

What did you do then?

Shey Ghamogha:

I decided to visit the Director. I bought a fat ram for him.

Fomu:

(*Smiling*). Was the Whiteman happy?

Shey Ghamogha:

He had a special way of receiving special guests. My son, not only was the ram that had made me charged, galloped, hopped like a frog, hauled up in front of every passerby and danced wildly rejected. I was threatened with police action should my footprints be spotted around the vicinity of his compound again. These were the words of gratitude reserved for someone who reduced a ram to a gift.

Fomu:

Baa, did you tell the White man that the people of *Kibaaka* eat rams?

Shey Ghamogha:

I was given thirty seconds to quit his

compound and forty eight hours to pack out of the camp. I returned to *Kibaaka* and settled in my father's house (*the children gape at each other*).

Bame: *Baa*, was this house built by your father?

Shey Ghamogha: (*Takes a deep breath and continues*). I am a husband and father but not a man. I am everything a man is not.

Bame: *Baa*, I am not sure I understand you.

Shey Ghamogha: Bame. My father named me his successor before his death. A successor owns a home and land when he is in power. He relinquishes his grip over inherited property when his term of office is over.

Bame: (*Brings his eyebrows together, and exchange glances with Fomu*).

Shey Ghamogha: I was born Michael Ghamogha. This compound belongs to Shu-shey Ghamogha, and not to Michael Ghamogha. I own this compound as long as I stay in power. If the title is passed on to another household, he inherits everything I inherited and achieved. That's why we need our own home in our own land. Bame, Fomu. If circumstances other than death install this red feather (*touches a feather quivering on his cap*) on another head, the beneficiary inherits everything I achieved including my wife and children. (*Bame gapes open-mouthed*).

Fomu: It cannot happen.

Shey Ghamogha: It has happened.

Bame/Bame: How?

Shey Ghamogha: (*Whispers*). I discovered a land title in your mother's name.

Fomu: *Baa*, you just said we need land.

Shey Ghamogha: Not when it bears a woman's name?

Bame: Is there any law that says a woman cannot own land?

Shey Ghamogha: *Mwerong* forbids a woman to own land in *Kibaaka*. (*Fomu nods*).

Bame: Why?

Shey Ghamogha: We cannot question tradition. Besides, if we allow a woman to own land, what happens to the land when she gets married? The answer is obvious. She drags along her family heritage to another family. And the authority of the stranger over that land will not be disputed. Bame. Fomu. What tradition dreads has happened under my own roof. What will I tell the Elders? What will I tell *Mwerong*?

Bame: *Baa*, who is actually the owner of that land, *Mami* or *Mwerong*?

Shey Ghamogha: The head of the family owns land. Land belongs to the man. Crops belong to the woman. (*Fomu nods*). Bame, land is power. If you give land to a woman, you authorize her to share in the power. Tradition does not die. That's what I told her last night. I insisted on having the land title she is keeping. (*Pauses and continues*). Could her disappearance be traced to the quarrel we've been having over land?

Bame: No. *Baa*, maybe *Mami* went to have a bath in the big river. I remember...she did not put on clothes...

Shey Ghamogha: (*Cutting in*). What?

Bame: Her chest was bare. (*Shey Ghamogha shrugs*). She did not put on shoes. She was wearing only a loin cloth that covered her slightly above the chest (*Shey Ghamogha's forehead erupts ridges*).

Shey Ghamogha: (*Takes in air noisily, and fixes a gaze towards the*

small footpath that leads to the stream. Footsteps galloping through the yard outside. Shey lifts up his head when a crunch of feet begins to storm his ears. Elders barge in and surge frontwards breathing heavily. Shey Ghamogha and children rise to their feet and shudder at seeing unexpected villagers invade their sitting room).

Taa Gheh:

(A shrunken looking man, wearing a ragged matted cap on his partially revealed bald head staggers forward and sticks out his chest. He holds his drippy mouth like the anus of a diseased fowl, yawning, gaping and waiting for death. Stooping and rocking his withered arms, he looks like a descendant of the family of Praying mantis. His face is as if he is sneezing. His segmented forehead is furrowed and betrays the appearance of a frowning mask. The upper part of his upper lips, slightly below the two openings in the nose is roofed with a mass of brown beards. The skin on his partially revealed jaws hangs loose. Like a mass of foam scrambling for space on the jaws of an old gorilla, a bush of beards streams down the jaws it has conquered and hangs below his chin giving him the appearance of a handsome gorilla. His lean arms reveal numerous veins; his blank eyes appear to be sinking; his hair is white while his lips are munching relentlessly. He is wearing a threadbare tiger-coloured jumper over trousers sparingly butchered at both the buttocks and knee level. Age has similarly left gaping holes in the walls of his jumper. As the elders come to a halt in the middle of Shey's sitting room and Taa Gheh begins to croak, vapour streams from his mouth and nostrils). Hei! Hei! Taa Shihndzev saw it coming. And it has happened (grimaces as he turns his face to the opposite direction). The worst has happened.

Shey Ghamogha:

Ability:

I saw locusts. I can take it. I'm a man.

(Totters forward and unevenly, stands on the toes of his left leg and leans on a crude walking stick. He has a charcoal complexion; he is stout, has a thick face, dark skin, inquisitive and pompous eyes. One of the legs of his trousers is rolled up. He wears a hard flat hat which has a curved part at the front that gives it the form of a bicycle seat. He has a confrontational appearance. With the heel of his left leg lifted off the ground, he inclines on rugged-face staff and begins to rant). I hate to be the one to inform you that we've not brought good news. *(Shey Ghamogha shrugs).* The passing wind has scooped life out of the veins of the land.

Taa Gheh:

What my ears have heard. What my eyes have seen *(grimaces again).*

Ability:

I had the misfortune of having been another eyewitness.

Shey Ghamogha:

Ability:

Is she still breathing?

(Manages to hobble one leg over the staff, stands at a slant, and continues to rant). Like a tapper's calabashes dangling from the walls of palm trees, breasts had collapsed from the wall of the chest and descended almost into the threshold of the region below the hive of children. *(Shey Ghamogha and his children hang their mouths open).* My heart almost leapt out of this chest into my hands when I saw drooping breasts swinging like the lifeless body of a man that has committed suicide by hanging from the branch of a tree.

Shey Ghamogha:

Ability:

Is she dead or alive?

The site I watched sapped me of words. Shey. Everyone took the best position possible to catch a glimpse of the thatched territory.

Shey Ghamogha: Thatched what?

Ability: The vicinity of the entire region looked like a tiny thatched roof.

Shey Ghamogha: I still do not understand.

Ability: The door between her legs looked like the entrance of a cave (*Shey Ghamogha shrugs*). Elders of *Kibaaka*. At every stage I adopted appropriate postures to be able to perceive (*shades his right eye with his right hand as he slants his head to the right*) the action from positions that would be inaccessible to mortal eyes (*Shey Ghamogha hangs his head down*). I was utterly rapt of breath when my eyes located what should be veiled regions yawning and gaping dreadfully at spectators.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Voice rattles in his throat*). W-w-w-where is her body?

Ability: I am still wondering how I survived the shock of what I watched.

Taa Gheh: My legs are still heavy. My heart is still galloping and jumping.

Shey Ghamogha: C-c-can someone tell me what is happening?

Ability: Close-up, no observer could miss the tiny jungles of thatched bushes that clustered below withered-looking stomachs. In fact, we watched in disbelief clusters of impenetrable thatches of hairs teeming up on the threshold of the neighbourhood of her laps (*Tav Banboye squeals*). From a distance, I stood frozen and robbed of strength as a feeling of danger crept over me (*Shakes his head*). The tension that almost crushed me has not yet abated. My heart almost crumbled under the weight of shock when an emotional epidemic erupted in *Kibaaka*.

Taa Gheh: I thought I was one finger away from death.
Ability: *(Roars of voices leap high in the air from the direction of the palace).* Shey Ghamogha, can you hear gusts of voices?

Shey Ghamogha: *(Slants his head to the right and nods).* What is actually happening?

Taa Gheh: Command has put teeth into the mouth of fowls.

Shey Ghamogha: What?

Ability: Weijing has clad women in strange garments.

Shey Ghamogha: And?

Ability: The reputation of the clan is in tatters.

Taa Gheh: Shey. The tap roots of Weijing are deeply planted in *Kibaaka*.

Shey Ghamogha: Taa Gheh, Ability. What's the meaning of this drama?

Taa Gheh: The beetle that destroys the raffia tree lives inside the raffia tree.

Shey Ghamogha: Is mother of children dead or alive?

Ability: Alive *(Shey Ghamogha puts his left hand on his chest).*

Tarhnteh: Ability, Tah Gheh, if you teach somebody, that person will never pass an exam.

Ability: All is not well. Tarhnteh, women are coming out of holes.

Taa Gheh: They are sitting at the mouth of the palace.

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngiri!*

Ability: The heart of the land is swarming with women. I watched *Come no Gos* pouring themselves in the palace. And as I am talking to you right now, the palace is littered and inundated with women and ticks.

Shey Ghamogha: Not in *Kibaaka*.

Ability: They are even ready to commit suicide.

Shey Ghamogha: The branch has challenged the trunk to a fight.

Ability: The arm of the land has challenged the centre. Shey Ghamogha, you haven't heard anything yet.

Taa Gheh: Rats are dancing in the presence of cats.

Ability: As we are talking to you now, the heart of the land is hiving clusters of protesters masquerading as apostles of women's rights.

Shey Ghamogha: The man in the woman will be crushed today.

Tav Banboye: Thank you.

Ability: Shey. You haven't heard anything yet. Most vexing was one of the placards that carried the picture of a pregnant woman in pains of childbirth. My eyes crept into the doorway of her legs.

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngiri!*

Ability: The gulf of darkness became a residential cave. At the very moment the sun gave a broad smile with its lips moving apart, the budding voice was hatched from the hive (*The elders shrug*). A voice darted out from the cradle of life. Its head was sprouting a mass of dark hair. (*Shey Ghamogha crinkles up his nose in astonishment*). We heard a screech. We saw it creeping along. We watched it walking with a stagger. As the smiling sun started to disappear behind the hills, a frail looking woman appeared holding a staff and managed to hobble around with it.

Shey Ghamogha: Ability. Are you dramatizing a dream?

Ability: This is not roadside talk. The messages on banners and placards they wielded in the air said it further. "HATCH AND EMERGE. THE WOMAN'S VOICE IS NO LONGER IN THE BUD. LIBERATION BIRTH. LET THE WOMAN SPEAK."

Tav Banboye: Abomination!

Ability: The woman's voice is born.

Shey Ghamogha: Not in *Kibaaka*!

Ability: The almighty tradition is just a few steps away from the grave.

Shey Ghamogha: Not when I am still breathing.

Ability: Organised chaos is blossoming right in the heart of the land.

Taa Gheh: Tell Shey Ghamogha.

Ability: Shey, to tell you the extent of their excesses, the walls of their bodies were bare.

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngir!*

Ability: It shocked everyone who shamelessly allowed their eyes to watch little regions roofed with tiny junks of bushes (*the Elders close their eyes with their hands*). Even a harmless bachelor could not avoid shooting his eyes in the right location.

Tav Banboye: *Hei!*

Taa Gheh: Their legs were spread apart like a place where two roads meet.

Ability: And for a woman to expose what looks like lack of respect for human eyes is tantamount to sheer rudeness. Shey, I thought women have become insensitive to the demerits of disgrace.

Shey Ghamogha: Ability! Taa Gheh! Are you sure of what you're telling *Kibaaka*?

Taa Gheh: (*Jerks his beards as he speaks*). Do you know how many times I have shaved this thing? (*Shey Ghamogha shakes his head*).

Nyudze: Somebody told me women have been combing jungles for supporters.

Taa Gheh: Their day start before cock crow.

Ability: And that is approximately the time I heard the

clump of footsteps around my house. As sandy water crunched under feet that walked past outside, I reared up my head and listened. One could think fifty mouths were munching on kola nuts at the same time. Assuming that goat thieves were around; I leapt out of bed, held my knife and spear, peered through gutters the raging 90s left on the walls of my house, scrambled into this gown and crawled out of the room through the window. Guess what I saw. Streaks of light streaming from bush-lamps revealed the bush swarming with women (*imitating*) staggering to and fro, swaying from side to side, and trudging through the heart of the bush (*the elders shrug*). I trailed them till I discovered their destination was the palace.

Taa Gheh:

Elders of *Kibaaka*. The worst has happened. (*Hops across the floor to the door, stretches his neck forward, peeps into the yard through distant leaves, returns, looks at Ability and speaks*). Tell them what somebody whispered in our ears.

Ability:

A woman has bought land in her name.

Elders:

(*In a chorus.*) What?

Tarhnteh:

Bought land?

Tav Banboye:

Which woman?

Nkferkibu:

How?

Tav Banboye:

From who?

Nyuydze:

Not in *Kibaaka* I guess.

Tarhnteh:

By the way, who is the woman in question?

Ability:

Mother of children.

Elders:

(*Screaming*). Heei! Ililililililililily! Chei! Chei! Ngiri! (*Elders shoot a glance at Shey Ghamogha and turn their faces away from him*).

Baa Medzefen:

(*Opens his teeth that reveal gaps laden with layers of*

thick brown particles. His chin is roofed with grey bushy beards that descend and shroud his neckline. With the roof of his upper lips raised, and the area separating his nostrils from the upper lips flanked by grey hair on which matted brown powder sticks out, he whistles a bird's tune).

Nyuydze: Shey Ghamogha. Is it true that the wife of a Shu-shey has bought land in her name?

Shey Ghamogha: I found the land title.

Ability: *He!* Shey Ghamogha. How long have you taken that information hostage?

Tav Banboye: And for what reason?

Nyuydze: Can anyone deny that Shey Ghamogha is an accomplice?

Elders: *Ngang!*

Ability: Where is the unfettered power tradition wilds?

Shey Ghamogha: (*Slowly*). Elders of *Kibaaka* land. Silence does not mean approval. I have not been sleeping either. I wanted to get answers to the same questions you're asking before informing you. Her presence in the palace today is probably a response to my persistent pressure to make her relinquish her claims to the land.

Ability: Who sold land to a woman?

Nyuydze: The land title should provide that information (*the elders nod*).

Tarhnteh: No! We can only find that kind of information on the Sale Certificate.

Ability: Shey Ghamogha. Comb your house for the Sale Certificate.

Nyuydze: Who even wrote the land title?

Taa Gheh: It is only *Gommen* who has the power to write that kind of book.

Ability: Women are benefitting from a crime.

- Nyuydze:** What did we do to the Headquarters to deserve this?
- Shey Ghamogha:** (*Muses briefly and speaks*). I have information that may be useful. (*The elders stick out their chests*). Remember the day the Minister and some people visited Lukong's forest. Because of the visit, it was rumoured that Command wanted to build another school for the blind. Some even said it was timber that they wanted. People were not ready to see tons of timber flooded out of *Kibaaka* again. Officer Lucas coached Lukong to sell the land to whoever was ready to put it to use (*Ability nods*). Lukong was afraid strangers might invade and occupy his land. He advertised it. Three weeks later, Lukong was found dead in his bedroom. How that land got into my wife's hands, I don't know.
- Ability:** Who even knows why death grabbed Lukong the very moment Command and the Head Quarters wanted to clutch on his land.
- Elders:** *Orrhorrrrr!*
- Nyuydze:** Could it be that Lukong sold land to a woman before dying?
- Ability:** Lukong could not defy the land. He was a real man.
- Nyuydze:** How did Mother of children acquire the land then? (*Shakes his head*). I don't know who to trust anymore if I cannot trust Lukong and Shey Ghamogha.
- Ability:** We need to investigate the matter further (*the elders nod*). We do not bury an abomination (*the Elders nod*).
- Tarhnteh:** Let us solve one problem after the other. The women are in the palace. For the sake of

Kibaaka honour, events that go along with disturbing tendencies should be staged elsewhere and not at the palace.

Shey Ghamogha:

(Closes his eyes, muses briefly, opens his eyes and speaks). Tarhnteh is right. Taa Gheh, you are the eldest amongst us. You are going to the palace with Tarhnteh and Ability right now. Ask the palace what action we should take on the strike action and the land issue. We will wait here till you return to us. *(Ability, Tabnteh and Taa Gheh walk out).*

Scene II

Shey Ghamogha's Sitting-room

(Ability, Tarhnteh and Taa Gheb file past across the floor solemnly with heads bowed).

- Shey Ghamogha:** What's the message from the palace?
Tarhnteh: The palace is gripped by the wrath of a strange illness.
- Elders:** *He!*
Tarhnteh: They were rushed to the shrine of *Kibaaka* for a cleansing sacrifice by Shufai Nsaw and Shufai Sarbam.
- Taa Gheb:** The sun may not smile on us before it is time for shadows to descend and swallow *Kibaaka* *(the elders shrug)*.
- Shey Ghamogha:** W-w-what about the women?
Ability: Emotional illness is very difficult to treat.
- Shey Ghamogha:** W-what is happening at the moment?
Ability: The drama has reached its climax.
- Shey Ghamogha:** Did you say drama?
Ability: A strong wind is racing through the land and trudging on seeds. The disease we embraced has stretched its roots beyond the borders. Fathers of Fathers. Immediately the women saw us advancing on the palace like flood waters, the anger that erupted shot voices five miles high.
- Shey Ghamogha:** *(Exclaims simultaneously with the Elders). Ngiri!*
Ability: Mother of children stood tall like a mountain right in the heart of the land. Like a house housing another, she sloped over women who sat clustered within her feet. *(Tarhnteh nods)*. Words gushed out of her mouth as if she was suffering from verbal diarrhoea.

- Shey Ghamogha:** This is not *Kibaaka* that I know.
- Ability:** I felt insulted when the voice of a woman soared over *Kibaaka*. For almost two hours, a woman addressed the swarm of hand-clappers whose minds she had bought with speeches and promises. My heart was stung by the shocking words her erupting mouth kept discharging.
- Taa Gheh:** Tell *Kibaaka* what your ears heard.
- Ability:** (*Mimicking*). “Fellow women, I attended a meeting in Weijing and brought good news for you. The light that Command and the Head Quarters said will shine on women has finally shone. The lid on our lips is unsealed. The rope with which the woman was tethered is untethered”.
- Shey Ghamogha:** Not in *Kibaaka*.
- Ability:** Shey, the palace is swelling with women perching on Mother of children and listening to declarations and conclusions.
- Shey Ghamogha:** She will hate my reaction.
- Ability:** As I watched organised chaos flourishing right in the heart of the land, I felt an unrestrained storm raging and urging a reaction that would have left the women with nothing but butchered buttocks.
- Tarhnteh:** Ability is right. The women we saw are not the women we know.
- Ability:** (*Nods and wiggles his hands and body as he speaks*). Words were invading and feeding. Elders of *Kibaaka*. You missed the power that words can wield. Words constructed power right in the heart of the land. Like a tree sitting on its roots, a colony of women clustered around their leader and gaped like servant dogs

- yawning, stretching and staring at the top and legs of the master's table for crumbs of bones.
- Tarhnteh:** Mother of children has created a world in another world.
- Shey Ghamogha:** A dog does not know that it is naked.
- Ability:** She even called herself 'a kingdom in the jungle.'
- Shey Ghamogha:** Someone is directing the play and the women are acting on stage.
- Ability:** Shey. You are right. An invisible tick is invading and robbing women of their minds. (*Wiggles*). Heil! You missed the village of disciples Her Majesty has harvested from jungles.
- Shey Ghamogha:** I can't believe the same Ability we're watching trotting from side to side was right in the palace but decided to reduce himself to a spectator.
- Ability:** You have no idea about what was going on in my mind. Is there anybody here who cannot recall the number of years I transported buckets of excreta on this head; (*pokes his head with his finger, stops briefly and continues*) from torture cavities to pits simply because we burnt down homes and property belonging to strangers in an attempt to execute orders from *Mwerong*? I was reared in *Kibaaka*. Shey Ghamogha. If Tarhnteh had allowed this senior citizen (*tapping his chest*) to lay hands on women and *Come no Gos* (*laughs briefly*); history would have recorded another unprecedented tragedy because none of them would have come out alive and in one piece.
- Tav Banboye:** Who does not know Mvem Ability!
- Ability:** Muscles were raging. I fumed and raged and

charged and catapulted...
Shey Ghamogha: (*Cuts in*). And what happened?
Ability: Yaya speculated so well and targeted men. She was aware that no eyes would resist the temptation of peeping through the road junction her legs had created. When I noticed that she positioned her legs in a way it could easily be located, and gaped at men, I understood immediately that any prying eyes were likely to constitute the delicious meat.

Tav Banboye: *Hei!*
Ability: The gap between her legs was so wide that daring eyes could unavoidably disappear into the fangs of the toothless bold den violently cleft into two regions (*the elders turned their faces away from Ability*). Yaya was ready to cast a spell on any intruder. A black pot sat on three stones. Yaya gripped fresh leaves firmly between her lips. She never spoke a word. Her hand regularly disappeared into the pot each time an intruder attempted to smuggle his legs into the borders of the den they had constructed. Each time a man attempted to jump into the circle, she dipped her left hand into the pot and wiggled her fingers in water.

Elders: (*The elders scream*). *Hei!*
Taa Gheh: Elders of *Kibaaka*. The father of my father used to say that it is only the road that will chase away darkness from swallowing *Kibaaka*.

Ability: Our own road has brought nests of thorns to *Kibaaka*. And now the sun has clad the land in veiled agendas.

Shey Ghamogha: When tradition rages, it bends or breaks.
Taa Gheh: Not when branches are becoming stronger than the trunk.

Nyuydze: Who is their coach? Where is their power coming from?

Ability: Ask Command, the Headquarters, Nginyam and MANDJARA.

Shey Ghamogha: A cricket screams louder when its days are numbered.

Tarhnteh: Not when Lawyer Hallen is concerned.

Ability: Tarhnteh is right. MANDJARA is storming and capturing. All the contagious women in *Kibaaka* are nurtured in the nursery called MANDJARA SEED SOWING FOUNDATION. Mother of Children and Lawyer Johnson are ring leaders.

Shey Ghamogha: Who is this Lawyer Hallen by the way?

Ability: That overripe banana. That woman whose mother was the daughter of our princess. I am talking about the daughter of Mr. Bizmak Good-luck (*Shey Ghamogha lifts up his face as if trying to recall from memory*). Remember the white skin man who married our daughter, refused to pay a bride price on her and told the Fathers of Fathers that death had released the lady from the clutches of tradition and she was now available (*Tarhnteh gives a silent head nod*). He even attacked masquerades in the forest and claimed that he saw dwarfs on the mountain and shot them for fear that they could devour him with claws.

Shey Ghamogha: Are you talking about the stranger who refused an invitation to attend the Fathers of Fathers' meeting and said giants could not sit in a meeting chaired by dwarfs?

Ability: (*Nods*). Command and her agents are playing the drum and the women are dancing to its rhythm.

- Shey Ghamogha:** Ability. All the strangers left *Kibaaka* already. How can they exercise that kind of influence when divorce was decided by the law?
- Ability:** Their taproots are deeply planted in *Kibaaka*. The eyes and ears of white feathered friends are the Headquarters and MANDJARA.
- Nyuydze:** Are we saying that our own people have a hand in this matter?
- Ability:** One does not earn the title of a hawk if he can't swoop on fowls.
- Taa Gheh:** Are we saying that the people Command planted here to shield us are eating the hides on which they sleep?
- Ability:** Isn't it obvious that the bird calls itself Head of House because the house owner allowed it to build its nest in his roofs? Isn't it obvious that after losing several battles to poverty and hunger, land and tradition should constitute cheap targets?
- Taa Gheh:** (*Shakes his head*). Since *Ngomma* opened the doors of *Kibaaka* to *tringers*; problems are giving birth to problems.
- Shey Ghamogha:** What was once one people and one culture has branched out into branches and suckers giving *Kibaaka* the image of a rat with two tails.
- Ability:** Is that not sufficient reason to act fast? Is that not legitimate reason to inform the *Come no Gos* that their period of occupation is over?
- Hon S Wirkitum:** (*Stands.*) Hi folks. (*Ability shoots an angry glance at the dark-brown wavy hair man speaking through the nose*). I've been listening silently but attentively. Dialogue is necessary when we disagree. We don't solve a problem with a problem. We've not heard from the women.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Stands). Honourable Shey Wirkitum, if the time to relinquish your grip on the steering wheel of power (pointing his finger to the red feather on Shey Wirkitum's cap) has sounded its departure bells, I am not ready to crash with you (the Elders nod).*

Baa Medzefen: *(With a wiggle of his buttocks, he turns and jerks up his trousers. Kila shudders with laughter as she watches spots of withered looking buttocks rendered overt by his butchered trousers. He sits down, catches the protruding cap of his partially revealed brown underpants with his right fingers, tucks it between his legs and crosses his feet over each other. Taa Gbeh sits down close to Baa Medzefen.*

Shey Ghamogha: *Bame. Fomu. Arrange chairs in the yard. (The children withdraw). This meeting continues outside. (The Elders begin to walk out).*

Scene III

Shey Ghamogha's Courtyard

- Shey Ghamogha:** Cult of Traditional giants. I greet you.
- Elders:** *Feyi!*
- Shey Ghamogha:** We all know that when the branch is infected, the trunk is affected. (*The Elders nod*). What do we do?
- Ability:** If tradition must survive the blows of MANDJARA, we must stem the tides of extinction (*Baa Medzefen looks at Ability open mouthed*).
- Tarhnteh:** (*Stands*). Government likes peace. Let us inform the Headquarters that women and *Come no Gos* are disturbing the peace of the land.
- Elders:** (*Answering with a nod*). *Feyi*.
- Nyuydze:** Ability, I know you can weave a good story from the strike action. Write a letter to the Headquarters now and copy *Nginyam*. Inform the Headquarters that the women are determined to murder and bury the peace of the land (*the Elders nod*). They will react.
- Taa Gheh:** Pull the ground towards our side (*the Elders nod again*).
- Ability:** (*Stands up*). If we must get rid of cancer before it germinates and colonizes the body, it must be stemmed from the bud (*The Elders nod*).
- Taa Gheh:** *Bility*, we have heard that when a bird is dancing on the road, there are drummers in the bush.
- Nyudze:** Taa Gheh is right. Women and the Headquarters are like body and soul.
- Ability:** When a storm shows no sign of abating it needs another storm to restrain it.

MANDJARA and *Come no Gos* are rotten seeds that should never sprout and bear in *Kibaaka* (*the Elders nod*). Shey Ghamogha, you carry the weight of the land on your shoulders. This is the time *Kibaaka* should feel the strength of your red feather.

Shey Ghamogha:

I do not rule *Kibaaka* alone.

Tarhnteh:

Shey Ghamogha has spoken well. The palace is our father...

Ability:

(*Cuts in*). Tarhnteh. The palace remains one of the suspects unless “they” swear an oath on the throne that “they” are innocent.

Elders:

(*Scream simultaneously*). *Hei!*

Taa Gheh:

Bility. Give thanks to our fathers that Mbiame and Dinka are not here.

Ability:

What I tell people about the palace is what I want the palace to hear.

Tarhnteh:

Ability! Mind your words.

Ability:

Nginyam is a branch of the Headquarters and Command. Women and *Come no Gos* are one of their branches. The very *Come no Gos* who are littering the heart of the land were lumped to the throat of *Kibaaka* land by *Nginyam* and with the complicity of the same clique. Tarhnteh, listen very well. When a disease invades the body, we treat the roots and not the symptoms (*the elders nod*).

Shey Ghamogha:

How will that be done?

Ability:

Come no Gos must pay New Man Tax to sons of the soil. The eyes and ears of Command must be dislodged from *Kibaaka* (*the elders nod*).

Tarhnteh:

Ability, do you have a radio in your house? And have you been listening to news from TRCV these days? My worry is this. How can we fight women and *Come no Gos* without

provoking legal instruments that protect their right?

Tav Banboye: *Orrhrrrrrooo!*

Hon S Wirkitum: *(Speaks through the nose). Ebilidy.* Tarhnteh is right. The problem we're facing requires dialogue and not intrusion of sentiments.

Ability: If somebody wants to commit suicide, help him.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy.* The *Come no Gos* are in-laws. Command is our godfather. Command is an institution. Nobody fights an institution.

Ability: The he-goat should not insult his mother because he has double rights over her as son and husband *(the Elders nod).*

Hon S Wirkitum: *(Speaks through the throat as usual). Ebilidy...*

Ability: *(Cuts in).* Honourable, my name is Ability and not *Ebilidy.* *(Laughter erupting).*

Hon S Wirkitum: *(Continues).* Hie folks. We do not yet know what the women and strangers want to do for us. We've not even heard from them. They probably went to the palace because they see the man as a threat.

Ability: *(Shout).* I said it. Honourable, this is uncluttered conspiracy.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy,* the woman has something to offer.

Ability: This is organized conspiracy.

Tav Banboye: I believe you.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy.* In other places women own land *(the Elders shrug).* Listen folks. Government is aware of what the women are doing.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Puckers his face).* Honourable, can a law fight another law?

Elders: *(A loud drone). Orrrhrrr!*

Hon S Wirkitum: Hie Folks. *(Ability puckers his face).* Everybody one finds on stage is important. There's no

actor without a role, and there's no role without a message. I'm sure women have something to offer.

Ability: I cannot eat good food from a filthy dish.

Tav Banboye: Exactly.

Ability: Elders of *Kibaaka*, this is time for decisions and not deliberations (*the Elders nod*). *Come no Gos* and all the eyes and ears of Command must leave *Kibaaka* today!

Elders: (*Approve*). *Feyi!*

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, are we not being too hard in our judgment and conclusion?

Ability: Are we able to bend women and strangers when the source from which they tap their strength is firmly lodged in the womb of *Kibaaka* soil?

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, (*Ability grimaces*). Is it not thanks to the very strangers we want to evict from *Kibaaka* that the days of storm are over?

Ability: (*Flares up.*) Honourable, almost all the big positions are controlled by the *Come no Gos*. More than three quarters of *Kibaaka* land is owned by strangers. The majority and original inhabitants of *Kibaaka* are now beggars in their own land. Is that the storm that is over?

Elders: *Orrhrrr!*

Hon S Wirkitum: They left you better than they met you.

Ability: This is an insult! Honourable! Our opinion was not consulted when your kind invaded and installed themselves in *Kibaaka*.

Hon S Wirkitum: How can we be unappreciative to the very strangers who rescued *Kibaaka* from the fangs of darkness? Folks, do not bury your history.

Ability: Honourable, are you aware we're talking about the Wise Men from the Land of the Rising

Sun and their agents? Are you aware we're talking about reapers and tappers who leapt over Anthills into the heart of darkness? The preachers who claimed that the budding minds they fed will sprout and feed? Honourable Wirkitum. Do you have any idea what havoc the very strangers wrecked on the womb of *Kibaaka* soil in the name of a rescue mission?

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy. The land was barren and needed manure. Our friendship with strangers is still fruitful.

Shey Ghamogha:

Ngiri!

Ability:

Honourable, I will now tell you the part of the story you do not know. The barren *Kibaakans* that needed manure unbolted their arms and almost strangled reapers in the name of embracing potency donors. Listen very well. As the drowning man clutched onto the snake, the story developed branches. First it was water they came to give us. Water tanks were affectionately lodged in the heartfelt embrace of our soils while full-blooded *Kibaakans* were flooded out of homes and displaced. Next, it was darkness that had bathed *Kibaaka* in shades that they came to get rid of. (*Imitates*). "The burial of darkness is programmed". "The sun will shine where shadows had engulfed". "Tap from the source". Honourable, as soon as we were strapped onto the walls of their chests to tap from the source, the story developed sub-plots.

Hon S Wirkitum:

In what ways?

Ability:

Hunting grounds were mercilessly carved up like the tattooed face of an angry mask. Hunting Region lost its pride as a fertile

hunting ground. Taa Gheh, Medzefen, Nkferkibu and a host of other hunters were rendered jobless during the day, homeless during the night and hopeless at all times. (*A gale of laughter is unleashed from lips*).

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilibdy.....

Ability:

That's not all. *Kibaaka* became a womb of mystics and prophets. Jehovah Crusaders, Synagogue of Ambassadors, Fountain of Hope, Chapel of Reapers, Citadels of knowledge; in fact assorted varieties of Religious Shrines sprouted everywhere. (*Waits until the chorus of laughter dies down*). Afraidsekar, Mevick, Evangelist Chris, Prophet Judge Shaw, and Ngoungorou Park were carved out on Castles and monuments meant to brandish messages about Lions and Chimpanzees. And what was the outcome? These miserable hunters sitting here lamented and grumbled under the weight of hunger, joblessness, poverty and frustration. Monkeys and chimpanzees became land lords as they wasted no time to come out of jungles and celebrate the distance between their legs and roaring bullets that had constantly whistle past their ears each time they sneaked out of holes to prey on harvests. Water and the New Book became nests of thorns. Today, women are teaming up in networks. They have even invited foreign authority to *Kibaaka* (*Shey Ghamogha rears up his head*). Can anyone deny that *Kibaaka* has developed abscesses all over the walls of her body?

Tarhnteh:

Ability! It's ok! We have sent word to Nginyam.

- Ability:** What is Ok? The fact that Taa Gheh and Baa Medzefen are already in an advanced stage of dehydration and hunger? Is that what is ok? Tarhnteh, if these miserable hunters who crawl like creeping worms that did not develop maturely before birth have decided to be silent when they should speak, Ability will not join them. (*The elders tremble with laughter as all eyes watch Taa Gheh and Baa Medzefen*). By the way, why is the palace always trembling when there is a crisis concerning land? Can anyone deny that women and *Come no Gos* have fuelled *Nginyam's* stomach? And even Honourable?
- Elders:** *He!*
- Taa Gheh:** (*Hops toward the door, thrusts out his head, casts his eyes in both directions and returns to his seat*). Bility, give thanks to your fathers because between those walls and the courtyard, Dinka and Mbiame are not around-
- Ability:** (*Interrupting*). What would happen if they were around?
- Taa Gheh:** If that story goes out, by the time you finish the story of fuelling *Nginyam's* stomach, you will be living in *Kiyungndzen*.
- Ability:** I am feared by the very system that a character like Taa Gheh adores.
- Taa Gheh:** If you insult the palace, you are insulting *Kibaaka!* (*Tav Banboye nods*).
- Ability:** Some people talk behind. I talk in public. Taa Gheh. Where was the palace when I spent miserable years behind the bars? And who authorised the Rapid Intervention Vigilante Forces to set fire on houses the Headquarters, Command and *Come no Gos* had raised in *Kibaaka* and around *Kibaaka* Water

Autonomy? *Errhrrr*? Was it equally Ability who coached and conducted the Vigilante group to reduce the D.O.'s house into ashes? Answer! Was it not the very coaches who tried and succeeded to reduce the strength of the Vigilante group by saying that the protesters were just a handful of misguided people led by Ability? (*Laughter continues to erupt from open-mouthed jaws*). *Errhrrr*? Have you suddenly forgotten that the same statement was decisive in conducting Ability to *Cavendengue* for another prison term? Taa Gheh, is it normal that the palace did not even bother to find out whether we were dead or alive? If the referee had said it was the new coach who conducted the Vigilante group to burn down houses, would I have eaten cold-water Garri for years in a cage where my friends and enemies were lizards, cockroaches, ticks, urine and tiny mountains of faeces?

Tarhnteh:

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Hon S Wirkitum:

(*Imploring*). *Ebilibdy*, the conflict you're evoking was mended already.

Ability:

The end of conflict did not imply the end of consequences. My skin developed hives when I left that dark cage. My house looks like a home that is constantly visited by death. (*Pointing to his left foot*). The bottom of my foot looks like the hoofs of a horse. My mother knows I was not born with a slanted foot. Honourable. A mended pot would always leave scars to remind eyes that what's left is patched up traces.

Tarhnteh:

Ability, stop it now!

Ability:

My story is not yet told. Elders of *Kibaaka*, if

we do not weed out strangers from *Kibaaka*, the little land we are left with will soon be hustled for oily negotiations.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, strangers have nothing to do with the land that brought us here. You are the ones selling your land to strangers.

Ability: Elders of *Kibaaka*. Once upon a time there lived a certain Mother River. Every morning she gave birth to twins. Every night she fed on her own tributaries and became pregnant again. The river increased in size and length as the streams from which it tapped became its constant supply of raw materials. The desert saw what was happening and was afraid she would be swallowed by the river the same way a she-goat sucks the breasts of her young ones. “Why is it that none of us is married, yet you keep bearing children every day?” The desert asked. “I crept up the hills, leaped over mountains and valleys, galloped, crawled across matted bushes and ate barks of trees to fertilize the womb from which my own race will spring and sprout”.

Nyuydze: Are we saying that the presence of strangers means our land is not safe?

Ability: For what other reason do you think Command planted tap roots everywhere in *Kibaaka*? Tell Ability.

Taa Gheh: What will a river do with a calabash of water? How can someone carry an elephant on his shoulders and still grope for crickets with his legs?

Ability: For what other reason do religious shrines stick out even in bedrooms? For what reason do you think the Queen’s vocabulary

continues to lurk and sprout in every fibre of our thought processes? Nyuydze, have you ever cared to find out why people who possess a lavished command of traditional vocabulary like us should think in our language but write in imported linguistics? *Errrrr?*

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilibdy, that's not what brought us here.

Ability:

Can anyone deny that a character like Honourable who drones like a cluster of bees buzzing from a beehive is a sprout of Command? (*A chorus of laughter is heard*). Has any of you ever questioned why Honourable Shey Wirkitum speaks with a sonorous gurgle like a stream gushing from rocky cavities? Do you think the reason is simply that he wants to feel superior? Is Franglisha that Honourable struggles to imitate not the fibre that still chains our world to Motherlands and Fatherlands? Is it not the same Franglisha we claim to have dislodged from the vehicles of our thought processes that is increasingly becoming our own messenger? Is it for nothing that absence still survives in the heart of the presence? Elders of *Kibaaka*, would I be wrong to suggest that half-bloods and agents of Command be flushed out of *Kibaaka* at least to secure our land for sons of the soil? (*Honourable frowns*).

Elders:

Ngang.

Ability:

Honourable Shey Wirkitum, why do you frown? Does a royal guest erect a royal bed in his host's sleeping room even after the parting kiss? Can the soul continue to survive where its corpse was buried? Tell me. Does the living

- celebrate life or death? Honourable, is it not intruders like you that stormed *Kibaaka* and carved up thorny boundaries with raging vocabulary that threatened trespassers with stinging persecution? And because of land?
- Hon S Wirkitum:** (*Warns*). *Ebilidy!* Stop it now.
- Ability:** Elders of *Kibaaka*, the presence of characters like Honourable is sufficient proof that Command has come back again.
- Shey Ghamogha:** Ability, we are talking about land.
- Ability:** Western footprints are still everywhere. If we must take back our land from the women, bows and arrows should be ready to leave yawning holes in the walls of buildings erected by outsiders like the likes of (*shoots a provocative glance at Honourable as the Elders laugh*).
- Hon S Wirkitum:** *Ebilidy*, what do you mean?
- Ability:** In my opinion, *Kibaaka* should refuse to be littered with strangers.
- Elders:** *Feyi!*
- Tarhnteh:** Remember the policy of Help Your Neighbour our chiefs concluded (*Honourable nods*).
- Ability:** *Kibaaka* should not be paying the price of instability in neighbouring tribes. Shey Ghamogha is under obligation to reshuffle the traditional cabinet. All title holders will from today be full-blooded *Kibaakans*! (*A roar of laughter animates the speech while Honourable frowns*). At our discretion, titles may be hired out. To be brief, Honourable and other *Come no Gos* must pay New Man Tax to live in *Kibaaka*.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** *Ebilidy!* You began with the problem of land and ended with eviction and New Man Tax. I

want to apologise on your behalf (*Tav Banboye nods*).

Ability: Mr borrowed feathers, the question you should be asking these Elders is how much we would charge for hiring out a title for a year (*laughter erupts from Elders*).

Tarhnteh: Ability. We cannot throw out in-laws and displaced neighbours.

Ability: Tarhnteh, when a viper has hatched, eliminate the viper and all the young ones because they will grow up and sting.

Tav Banboye: Correct.

Ability: We are fighting a system with all its off springs and outgrowths.

Elders: (*In organised chaos, they unanimously applaud*). Feyi!

Hon S Wirkitum: Hie Folks! I don't think we want to be perceived as enemies of human rights and peace.

Ability: (*Rants*). Without casting any aspersions on anybody's identity, we need the absence of *Come no Gos*. (*Honourable puckers his massive face*.)

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebility...*

Ability: (*Cuts in*). It is more dangerous to refuse than to obey.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebility!*

Ability: Honourable! If the rotten potato is not extracted from the bag, the entire contents will be infected (*the Elders nod*).

Hon S Wirkitum: Folks. Do we realize what certain decisions we encourage can cost us?

Ability: Honourable, can you dislodge history? Or, are you by any means telling us that nobody has ever insulted you in a bar as a *Come no Go*?

Hon S Wirkitum: (*Rumbling*). Everybody belongs. Why should I be starved of birth rights in my father's land?

Why? *Ebilidy*, why should I constitute the subject of insult and ridicule whenever there is crises in *Kibaaka*? Why? Are we not enjoying the absence of war in this land? *Errbrrr*? Do you know the diplomatic implications of what you're inciting and fanning?

Ability:

Honourable Wirkitum. Why did you choose to read your identity in the expression *Come no Go*? And why must you snarl and growl each time we talk about strangers and outsiders? Honourable, how many funerals have you even attended in your father's land? Tell me. Where did I go wrong in suggesting that sons of the soil should cleanse the land of half-bloods? (*A gale of laughter is released by Tav Banboye's lips*).

Hon S Wirkitum:

When did your people start to realize that your land is not for half-bloods? Was it before or after marrying and making children with them? And if I may go further, how many of your people are living, working or even investing in other lands? *Ebilidy*, I belong!

Ability:

Where? How? Was your father, Moutapon Mfemshiveh from *Kibaaka*?

Tarhnteh:

Ability! It's enough!

Ability:

Did we make his father the eyes and ears of the Headquarters?

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy! You'll pay for this!

Ability:

Did we ask your father to smuggle himself and family into the Motherland, then to Warbongari, and subsequently to *Kibaaka*? Tell me! Can one who serves both *Ngiri* and *Mwerong* be trusted?

Elders:

Orrhorrrr!

Ability:

Did we cause the war that transformed your

father and his bundle of adherents into refugees and refuge seekers? Answer me. Did we ask him to create *Mwerong* where *Mwerong* is not due?

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy; this is taking us nowhere.

Ability:

Has Honourable ever cared to find out why his father smuggled himself and family into the Motherland to crawl under Refuge Cages that even rejected and bundled them out like bags of *Banga*? Honourable! Do you think it was your father's choice to resettle and die in *Kibaaka*? Why is it that your father could only secure ownership over his own children through a court action? Do you think we don't know the main plot and sub-plots of the Curriculum Vitae that you are now determined to lay to rest? (*Honourable fumes in anger*). Can you tell us why your father had a dark skin but gave birth to an innovative breed of souls like you? Elders of *Kibaaka*, this character is a living testimony of the consequences of trading titles and red feathers in *Kibaaka*.

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy, stop it now!

Ability:

You are the reason why the criteria for attributing titles should be revised.

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy, my patience is very elastic, but I can set limits to its elasticity.

Ability:

Honourable, you are even the reason why a Traditional cabinet reshuffle is unavoidable.

Tarhnteh:

Ability! Apologise to Honourable now (*Tav Banboye nods*).

Ability:

Tarhnteh, what're you talking about? When you come from a desert and find a stream flowing, do you take just what you need or dig your hands deep? Tell me. It is no longer

history that Honourable and his people joined the Wise Men to swell the number of *Come no Gos* in *Kibaaka*. What was or is their mission in *Kibaaka*? They replace us in positions of power. They represent us. All magnificent houses belong to them. They have a name to protect. Sons of the soil have none. Tarhnteh, I will never stop perceiving Honourable as the product of a sacrilegious combination. *(Laughter storms out of lips)*.

Tarhnteh:

Ability, this is not what brought us here, please.

Ability:

(Continues to rant). A new breed of souls is sprouting in the land. Illegitimate successors are everywhere. The greatest casualty of blood pollution takes place in *Kibaaka*. Our land has become a breeding ground for a mix breed of humans. *(Honourable frowns)*. Women and strangers have taken advantage of our silence on the issue to buy land and stage strikes. The Traditional Prime Minister who doubles as Shu-shey is aware of the price he cannot avoid paying. I am urged to apologise for crimes Honourable and strangers have committed.

Hon S Wirkitum:

(Honourable peers vacantly into the distance and speaks). *Ebilidy*. I'm surprised that surviving discontinuities and the series of creeping experiences in your career and marriage lives could not even teach you lessons the classroom does not provide.

Ability:

Honourable! Do I look like someone who needs a lecture on ethics?

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy! I need to know how you were brought up. Who reared you? And what kind of home training did you receive? I have no idea how

and where your childhood was spent. But I'm sure your early life was not completely devoid of jungle influence. (*Shakes his head*).

Ability: When a father of children is talking, husbands should keep quiet!

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilibdy!* You have children but you're neither a father nor a husband.

Ability: Barren tree!

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilibdy.* Having a village of children is not even an achievement.

Ability: What?

Hon S Wirkitum: The value of fatherhood is felt in the quality of children we have and not in the quantity.

Ability: (*Ability rolls his finger on the ground and licks it*). Do not give me further reasons to send your heart quaking.

Hon S Wirkitum: You know the price you paid when you impersonated my late brother's identity. Dare touch me and you will pay a harder price.

Ability: Don't make it look like a comedy (*screws up his nose in anger*).

Hon S Wirkitum: I forgot that you like to associate only with tragedy. (*Laughter erupting from lips*).

Ability: My wrath is not something a *Come no Go* should desire to incur.

Hon S Wirkitum: If you are not an all-time tragic figure, where is your wife?

Ability: Avoid me!

Hon S Wirkitum: Do you call yourself a man?

Ability: Say your last prayer.

Hon S Wirkitum: You are no stranger to crime.

Ability: This is the climax.

Hon S Wirkitum: Of course, you are living the climax of your tragedy.

Ability: (*Crouches and Starts to roll up one of the edges of his*

trousers in silence. As Tav Banboye tosses his head from side to side with quick movements of his hands, Ability bends double, clenches his teeth and hands and tilts his head like a plane about taking off).

Tarhnteh: Ability! Stop it! This is taking us nowhere!

Ability: The grave is already dug. One of us must occupy it.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilibi.* What do you call yourself; a failure or a man?

Ability: *(Flings his staff, totters haphazardly, wobbles himself across the floor to swoop on Honourable, knocks Baa Medzefen over, manages to stagger towards Honourable again but plunges on Tarhnteh and Nyuydze. Ability and Honourable stand still gawking at each other as if in a boxing duel. Like a whirlwind, Ability leaps out of Tarhnteh's hands and hops on his good foot, swerves sides, and tries to advance menacingly towards Honourable. He stretches his hand to grasp the later on the shoulder. Honourable is shielded by Tarhnteh and Nyuydze while Ability is hemmed on all sides by Elders. Ability lurches forward and backward again, and leaps up to grip Honourable but clambers into the elders causing Baa Medzefen and Taa Gheb to fall on their backs with their legs lifted up).* Honourable. You will not always have this fence around you. Honourable *Come no Go*, open your lips again and give a lecture on my biography. Nonsense. Look at the biological confusion trembling like one in an epileptic attack.

Tarhnteh: It's ok! This is not what brought us here. You all know what brought us here. Honourable; sit down. Let's consider what we said to each other as mistakes and look forward.

Hon S Wirkitum: Some mistakes are decisions. *(Walks out).*

- Ability:** Disappear. Refugee. *Come no Go.*
- Tarhnteh:** (*Watches Honourable as he walks away*). Do we realize the harm we've caused? *Errhrr?* Honourable is not a refugee. His people captured us and occupied our land. His family is a strand of *Kibaaka* ancestry.
- Ability:** Tarhnteh, books say that Mikari people fled from war and settled in *Kibaaka*. Read "Fonso". Their story lingers everywhere. Where have you harvested your own version of the story from? Tell me. Tarhnteh. Are you sure you did not invent that story to separate Honourable from his real origin? By the way, if Mifem Tikari people truly captured us, why didn't they capture our language? Tell *Kibaaka*. Why would people capture us and yet join us to speak our language?
- Tarhnteh:** We were in the majority. I am sure that's why it is the languages we spoke at the time that survived. Besides, people have borrowed a lot from other people.
- Ability:** How can one even know through what means Mother of children bought land in *Kibaaka*? (*The elders nod*).
- Shey Ghamogha:** People of *Kibaaka* land. Issues that affect the wellbeing of the land are discussed in the heart of the land. Let us go to our cultural lodge. (*They nod and dispersed*).

Scene IV
In Manjong Hall

Shey Ghamogha: *(Coughs and looks around as if to ensure he exerts the silent dignity of authority he exercises in the Traditional Empire as a Shu-Shey and Traditional Prime Minister). Fathers of Fathers. Eyes and Ears of the Land. Rock of the gods. Cult of traditional giants. I greet you.*

Elders: *Feyi!*

Shey Ghamogha: I do not rule *Kibaaka* alone. Verdzekov. Go and inform Honourable that Fathers of Fathers are deeply sorry for what happened and have invited him to an urgent meeting *(Ability frowns as Verdzekov storms out of the hall).*
Honourable comes in followed by Verdzekov.

Hon S Wirkitum: Hi folks. *(Ability frowns).*

Elders: *Feyi.*

Shey Ghamogha: Elders of *Kibaaka*, the women are in the palace. Speak.

Tah Gheh: *(Stands).* Fathers of fathers. Can roots sit on tree tops?

Elders: *(Shrug their shoulders in protest). Ngang!*

Taa Gheh: Can the neck sit on the head?

Elders: *Ngang!*

Taa Gheh: Can the branch break away from the trunk and still breathe?

Elders: *Ngang!*

Nyuydze: Can we prune the raffia branches and claim we dried up the taproots?

Elders: *Ngang!*

Taa Gheh: A palm bush that houses maggots is butchered otherwise the house will be visited by infested bamboo wood *(the Elders nod).* Elders of

- Kibaaka*, what do we do with the weevil that eats the roof over its head?
- Ability:** Let's nib the disease at the bud (*the Elders nod*).
- Nyuydze:** We do not yet know that character who sold land to a woman. When we fish out the Sale Certificate, we will deal with the weevil that is using its fangs to puncture holes in the roof over its head. (*The elders nod*).
- Taa Gheh:** Now that Command, MANDJARA and the Head Quarters have "put teeth into the mouth of fowls", how can we solve this kind of problem without offending them?
- Ability:** A corresponding reaction will cripple the clique. That's the only way we can trim off the excesses of MANDJARA and recover our land.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** *Ebilidy*. The existence of MANDJARA has acquired national and even international dimensions.
- Ability:** Then, let us identify their intervention zones and set up local strategies to neutralize their strength (*the elders nod*). They must feel our presence at all times and everywhere they go. The only problem we have is lack of information about their silent plans and specific localities.
- Tarhnteh:** Ability. The women are highly connected.
- Ability:** Tarhnteh, if the presence of connections is a signal to your limits, I will not be silent when I should clench my fist in the air as a sign that trespassers do not need another lesson on how to shrink away (*the elders nod*). Let us dislodge who we feel is stronger (*the elders nod*).
- Tarhnteh:** Ability. Some of the trespassers are in-laws. Our people used to say a person who rears

she-goats cannot prevent he-goats from becoming his sons-in-laws.

Hon S Wirkitum: Tarhnteh is right. *Ebilydy*. We should be more together than divided. Marriage is partnership. Marriage is a cobweb of connections.

Ability: Honourable. Who is the loser in the merger? And who is the beneficiary in the unholy union? People of *Kibaaka*, those who think that in-laws are not threats should destroy MANDJARA.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Shouts*). The women are in the palace. Prompt action now. What do we do precisely?

Ability: Divide and rule (*Tav Banboye nods*). Next, Mother of children should not enjoy a prolongation of another term of office as leader of MANDJARA. Remove her as leader and the strength of the group is weakened. The potential substitute should be someone who is ready to listen to us. When we succeed, we will take back that land.

Shey Ghamogha: How will that be done?

Ability: A dog barks because it has no food in the mouth.

Elders: Feyi.

Ability: Money determines the winner of the game. (*The Elders nod*). Nobody who lives on crumbs will refuse to cooperate when a saturated negotiation (*Rubs and rolls his right thumb diagonally on the fore and middle fingers, as if counting money*) is the basis of the oath.

Elders: Feyi!

Ability: Nobody who combs pots and table tops for crumbs will hesitate to cooperate when a fattening compromise is the basis of the promise.

- Elders:** *Feyi!*
- Ability:** Nobody who licks fingers will contemplate before nodding when a compromise inundated with fats is the basis of the game of negotiation and exchange (*the Elders nod*). No boot licker will think twice when bargain by barter is the trophy the winner of the palm oil game drags home (*the Elders nod*). Nobody who rummages through palm bushes for crickets and combs muddy water for tadpoles will listen to saltless and dehydrated speeches (*the Elders nod*). Nobody who survives by the mercy of incomplete buildings will hesitate to collaborate when cash exchange hands.
- Tav Banboye:** I swear to God.
- Ability:** I assure you that if we play the game so well, the women and *Come no Gos* will swerve. Mother of children will be abandoned (*the Elders nod*). What I need is money and we will take back the land.
- Shey Ghamogha:** Ability, this matter is beyond the strength of money. I know my wife. Her conscience is something no amount of money can buy. Alternative strategies.
- Ability:** Women who are on strike should be subjected to sexual sanctions.
- Tarhnteh:** How?
- Ability:** The thing you wield between your legs is a disciplinarian. Any woman who went to the palace should lose her turn whenever she returns.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** *Ebilidy*, you might be the one losing your turn and thinking that the woman is losing her turn.
- Ability:** (*Ability rears up his head, lowers it and continues*).

Any woman who in any way supports the strike should never be accorded extra nights and extra hours even if her *Mbanya* is breast-feeding.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, we cannot speak on behalf of those who are not here.

Ability *(Ignores)*. Even if a strand of hair springs up in the heart of the night *(pauses and continues)*; even if the body is gripped by cramps of that wild thirst, hem it in immediately and continue to endure the fast.

Elders: *Feyi!*

Ability: No matter the amount of pressure exerted on us by raging muscles, nobody should go on a rampage. We will stop sharing the same beds with our wives in anticipation of a reaction that we can exploit to our advantage. If we must stop women from dreaming that they can own land in *Kibaaka*, nobody, I repeat; nobody should be tempted by hunger of the loins to violate the oath *(the Elders nod)*.

Taa Gheh: *Bility*. Is the thing you carry between your legs still breathing?

Hon S Wirkitum: What about those whose wives are not members of MANDJARA?

Tav Banboye: That's the question.

Tarhnteh: Elders of *Kibaaka*, we are talking and doing little. The presence of women and *Come no Gos* in the palace can attract journalists and consequently groups from the other side of the river. People are always benefiting from the problem we have with *Come no Gos*.

Ability: Tarhnteh is right. Now that the palace is on sick leave, I suggest we release *Mwerong* to trash and chase women and *Come no Gos* away

before media houses start flooding into the palace. It will not end there. All titled *Come no Gos* will either pay rents on their titles, or have their titles withdrawn (*Honourable frowns*).

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*. Some solutions are problems. I suggest we invite women to a meeting. Command and the Head Quarters are aware of what the women are doing.

Taa Gheh: Honourable, the person who licks honey should be ready to fight with bees. (*Ability nods*).

Hon S Wirkitum: I believe in dialogue.

Shey Ghamogha: Honourable. The right solution is more important to us than dialogue.

Hon S Wirkitum: Shey Ghamogha, the right solution cannot be the wrong decision.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Stands*). People of *Kibaaka*, we cannot go on talking, disagreeing and doing nothing. This is time for action. We must spare ourselves the humiliating act of being ruled by women and strangers (*the elders nod*). We must do something immediately to save our image from embarrassment and ridicule. (*Beckons some elders in turns. They come forward, murmur a few words and return to their stools. Holds up a staff, moves it from side to side and speaks*). You know what this stands for. The voice of fathers of fathers is the voice of *Mwerong* (*the elders nod*). *Mvem Ability*, stand up. When you were flushed out of the Military Service, you became *Kibaaka* foundation stone. You were very instrumental in the victory of *Kibaaka* during the water crises. In recognition of your services and sacrifices, *Kibaaka* made you leader of *Kibaaka* Vigilante Group. As a sign

of gratitude for what you are still to do, your grade in the rank is raised. From today, you are Commander in Chief of *Kibaaka* Rapid Intervention Vigilante Forces (*Ability smiles. Tav Banboye and some Elders shift their buttocks closer to Ability*).

Elders:

The voice of *Mwerong* is the voice of the land.

Ability:

(*Musing.*) This appointment gives me the legitimacy I needed to settle scores (*smiles*).

Shey Ghamogha:

Mvem Ability. This is the right moment to defend that gallant title. Mobilize the vigilante forces. Meet Kilamakwah (*turns to Ability*). Under the leadership of Mvem Ability Wangiri, the vigilante group will keep guard over the grazing land and the land our wife claim belongs to her (*Ability nods*). They will only withdraw when *Mwerong* has spoken. We will use part of our development funds to buy security materials. The money will be reconstituted later. Ability, this is one hundred thousand francs. Take it (*Ability smiles as he collects the money*). Twenty thousand francs should be used to buy rain boots and raincoats. Buy enough spears, bows and masks (*Ability nods*). Take good care of the Vigilante Group. Give each of them 300frs every day for food. Guard! Defend! Shield!

Ability:

With the powers bestowed on my humble self as Commander-in-Chief of the Traditional Vigilante Forces, I hereby declare my unflinching loyalty and determination to serve *Kibaaka* with all my strength, to defend and take back the land (*Elders applauding*) of our fathers from strangers (*the elders nod*). This is my plan of action. I will cripple the strength of

MANDJARA. That Association must crawl on crutches. Midnight is the last time MANDJARA Hall and houses constructed by strangers sprout in *Kibaaka!* (*The elders nod*).

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, this is gross misuse of power.

Ability: It is our heart a spear has stabbed and we are here talking about misuse of power.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, Command and the Head Quarters will not be silent when human rights are threatened (*Tarhnteh nods*).

Ability: They should have thought of that before giving power to women.

Tarhnteh: Ability. Remember the roaring and raging 90s. We can still recover the land without being violent (*Honourable nods*).

Ability: I decide whether violence is part of my job description or not.

Hon S Wirkitum: It hasn't come to that.

Ability: How can it come to that when your stomach hoards lakes of wine while mine croaks like a den of frogs? Look at *baa Medzefen* (*eyes turn towards baa Medzefen whose scraggy neck sticks out bones*). If we had our hunting land, these hunters hunching around you would not wither like dry bamboos (*the elders nod*). With the powers conferred on me as Commander-in-Chief of the Traditional Arm Forces, the vigilante vultures will carry out mass evictions tonight. (*Honourable frowns*). Any stranger who attempts to resist my decision loses his house to flames. (*The Elders nod*).

Tarhnteh: Ability! The past is still alive. The scars are still visible.

Ability: Nobody teaches me how to use my authority.

Elders: *Feyi*.

Tarhnteh: (*Stands*). Elders of *Kibaaka*, remember *Kibaaka* water crises. Remember the day *Kibaaka* set a deadline for Snake to park his bags and allow the management of *Kibaaka* Water to *Kibaakans*. Remember the hurricane howling across trees and bedrooms.
Remember the burning down of homes.
Remember the price we paid.
Remember how we chased and were traced.
Remember how the trapper was trapped in his trap.
Remember lives wedged in flames.
Remember lives hemmed in mud.

Ability: Nobody will be exposed (*the elders nod*).

Tarhnteh: Remember the legs thunder past; shaking hearts and houses.
Remember the bullets hovering, roaring, hooting, charging and beeping.
Remember the swarm of bullets that left gaping holes on the walls of chests.
Remember how bullets stormed and dislodged hearts from blossoming bodies.

Ability: Are we afraid of Command and the Headquarters?

Elders: *Ngang*.

Tarhnteh: Remember the blasts whistling, shrieking and screeching.
Remember the shuts prattling, jabbering, gibbering and galloping.
Remember the bows flaring, tracing, storming and stabbing.
Remember the bangs babbling, gyrating and rambling.
Remember the bumps shouting and shattering; rioting and raging.

Remember the arrows slaughtering, crashing
and crushing.

Remember the spears piercing, assaulting,
penetrating and invading.

Remember the babbling and chattering above
our hands and heads.

Remember the punches and strokes.

Remember the thumps, the whacks and
smacks.

Remember the cries and screams and shouts
and shrieks.

Remember how in matted forests, we crept
and crawled around.

Remember how we trailed with rats and
maggots.

Remember how furrowed faces peeked over
collapsing walls to see the outside world.

Remember how eyes wept to see fruits of the
womb wedged in flames.

Remember the buildings crumbling and
swallowing staggering legs.

Remember how faces crumpled with pain.

Remember how we clutched and leaped on
clutches.

Remember how hawks hunched and plunged
into budding laps.

Remember how we hopped and dropped in
matted bushes.

Remember how legs rustled through bushes.

Remember the damages. Remember the
boredom.

Remember the spears wedged between chest
bones.

Remember colonies of flies feasting on
remains of children who should live to testify

that we were fathers and not just men.
 Remember the voices screaming under beds in
 pains of childbirth. Remember the fowls and
 goats we lost to thieves who wasted no time to
 take advantage of the unfortunate incident.
 Remember intestines grumbling and howling.
 Remember how we devoured leaves and barks
 of trees.
 Remember the long lines in bakeries.
 Remember how we yawned and stretched.
 Remember the number of years Ability and
 hunters spent in Cavendengue.
 Remember how their children abandoned the
 classroom for abandoned vehicles. People of
Kibaaka; are we ready to crawl and creep
 around in bushes and corner holes again?

Elders:

Tav Banboye:

Tarhnteh:

Ngang!
 Count me out of this whole thing.
 Ability! Remember Ngunso and Din.
 Remember Gali and Gawoh.
 Remember Havory Coat, Dybia, Generia
 Bukarama, Konga, Vulnesia, Jijip, Tuturu
 Wakamuru and Santafrica.
 Remember Wahlimumbang and Wahmalang.
 Remember budding souls slaughtered, roasted,
 smoked and baked.
 Remember the lifeless heads yawning and
 gawking.
 Remember uncountable-unidentified headless
 trunks.
 People of *Kibaaka*. Those who have a village
 of children and relations and are tired of
 seeing them should step out here now!

Ability:

*(Steps out. Tav Banboye steps forward, notices others
 have not moved an inch and quickly swerves). They*

- Ghamogha. You are a King Maker. You are a First Class Chief. A hero does not crash without relics of the crash (*Shey Ghamogha hangs his head*).
- Shey Ghamogha:** (*Shakes his head*). Ability, Tarhnteh is right. Violence breeds violence. What about banning MANDJARA?
- Taa Gheh:** A rat provokes a cat because there is a hole nearby.
- Shey Ghamogha:** (*Shouts*). How can we take back the land with MANDJARA in power?
- Hon S Wirkitum:** Shey, women are not alone in the fight. Women are becoming an area one needs to trek with care. (*Baa Medzefen stretches and yawns*).
- Tarhnteh:** Let us learn to mend where we cannot bend. Given the present circumstances, I think what we can do is to keep evolving and changing strategies. (*Shey Ghamogha nods*). Use pillow diplomacy when all efforts have failed. Flatter your wives.
- Shey Ghamogha:** People of *Kibaaka*. Thank you for all your suggestions. We've listened to each other. We have a common goal. To take back land from the women. Assignments. I will carry your voice to *Mwerong*, *Nginyam*, Shufai Nsaw and Shufai Sarbam. Tarhnteh, you will inform Mother of children to suspend all activities on the disputed land until further notice (*Tarhnteh nods*). Ability. Under your command, the Vigilante group will keep guard over that stretch of land until *Mwerong* has spoken. Elders of *Kibaaka*, I will summon another meeting as soon as possible. We are tired. Go home and rest. (*They disperse*).

Enters Shey Ghamogha

Shey Ghamogha: Bame! Bame! Fomu! Where are they?
Bame: *(Answering from the room).* Yes Baa, We'll be right there, please.
Shey Ghamogha: Has your mother come back?
Bame: No.
Shey Ghamogha: Go to your room. Kila, feed the fowls and join them.
Bame: Baa...
Shey Ghamogha: I want to be left alone. *(The children withdraw. Shey ruminates).* In everything we do, the last destination is home. A personal home on one's own land. The ridges above my eyes carry the message that my legs are just a few steps to the last scene. I am leaving the stage. How was my performance? I do not qualify to be raised to the inferior rank of a tenant. What will history record? What about my red feather? How I wish I could play the role all over again. *(Pokes himself in the chest as he speaks).* I do not believe in failure. Either I am the owner or I'm not a man *(walks out and stares at stretched out shadows almost engulfing his courtyard).*

Scene V
In Ability's Room

Ability: *(Leaning against a cracked wall, he tries hard to Remember).* "You have children but you're neither a father nor a husband" *(shakes his head and begins to muse).* Was I dreaming? Could a *Come no Go* be courageous enough to dare a son of the native soil? Shouldn't they cling to sons of the soil like wet clothes on a body? Am I right

to assume that he simply wanted to test the strength of his charm? But, does he even believe in the unfettered powers that charms exercise? A guest in the house has the courage to say I am neither a father nor a husband! What an embarrassment! What is Honourable actually counting on? Maybe I summon up history for an answer. (*Lifts up his head*). My life is one long tragic tale. My life cracked up the day MANDJARA wrenched my wife from marriage and out of my clutch. I was deprived of the role of father and husband. MANDJARA dispossessed me of honour and thus denied me a position in the cult of traditional giants. Extended beads like the likes of Honourable are adorned in beads, clothed in red feathers and decked out with Tiger gowns. People snap their fingers and thumbs whenever they greet me while they worship and lionize Honourable and other sojourners when they perform the same act of greeting. Where husbands should sit beside their wives, Shey Ghamogha and Honourable are flanked by a queue of blossoming nipples while I am permanently cast in the inescapable role of a confirmed bachelor. On every important occasion, a guest like Honourable is installed on the high table where he reaches out his privileged hand for slices of juicy chicken. A full-blooded son of the soil like Ability perches on the back bench and by the time the tray reaches the rear; he can only receive crumbs fit for dogs and dustbins. Can you imagine that these things are happening under the watchful eyes of Shey Ghamogha who knows my worth only when he needs the services of a think-tank? Roof thatchers; basket weavers, and bird hunters are decked with red feathers. After my eviction from the Military, the highest position I ever held in *Kibaaka* was the

Chairman of a burial Committee. I was later on promoted to the miserable rank of leader of *Kibaaka* Vigilante group. Today, I am charged with the singular responsibility of roaming streets at night in the interest of Shey Ghamogha. What does he take me for? Haven't I been sufficiently denigrated and insulted? Is there any other way of stripping naked a man of my age other than denying him a red feather in the Council of Elders? Is there any other way of shredding off the only traces of authority a one-time combatant should brandish? (*Cocks his head up*). I cannot wait for death to fight my battles when there are no indications that any of those wearing feathered gowns is likely to die soon. If God should borrow me his title just for thirty seconds, anybody whose presence makes me invisible will taste the sting of my wrath. Shey Ghamogha's household is sprouting with life. Honourable's dominion is teeming with wealth. My own home is a breeding ground for hunger and frustration. Honourable eats, and sprouts and blossoms. I look like the twin brother of hunger. Nobody calls me husband or father. Shey Ghamogha connived with his wife to wrench mine out of marriage while he sits back to enjoy his own marriage. Honourable slaughtered my pride in public. Right in the presence of right thinking authorities of *Kibaaka*, he raised me to the humiliating rank of a failure (*shakes his head*). What has Honourable not done to Ability? How comes Police Officers waited to trap me with the chequebook just at the very moment I sneaked into the bank to claim the late man's pension? Who else informed the police that the chequebook disappeared from the late man's room the day I last visited him? (*Opens his eyes, closes and tries to remember*). "You cannot transform my house into a Charity

Organization.” (*Opens his eyes*). These were the words of Honourable. Just because his wife served me tea on three occasions, I became the reason why charity organizations exist (*shakes his head*). If strangers like Honourable can open my anus like a book for the world to read, the cause is partly Shey’s wife. She has wronged me sufficiently. Officer Lucas wanted to buy land from Lukong. How that land became her property; (*shaking his head*) God alone knows. It didn’t end there. She conveyed Biiywong into that infectious group. Drugged her with a hefty dose of rights. And made her to believe that a flood of diseases was lodged in my manhood. And what was the outcome? Of course no right thinking woman dares grope into a bed inundated with soldier ants. Biiywong rejected me. Abandoned the children to me; to bring them up all alone. My children did not have proper upbringing. Bongmum took refuge in the highway. Beri sought shelter in laps. The viruses she harvested from laps ultimately precipitated her early resignation from the world. Rita is lodging men old enough to call her granddaughter. Maika is snatching handbags in the city. My only hope, Officer Lucas, reaps from the hands of taxi men; yet, he doesn’t care how I manage to survive. Maayuh is in her own home; taking care of her husband and children. (*Pauses, screws up his nose and continues*). Which of the gods did I offend? It is time I get rid of the injury. It is time I hatch and unleash venom. My wrath must chase and sting. Measure for Measure. The wound must be healed. The game is soon to start. How? Fixtures. Strategies. Cook up events. Concoct stories. By the time I finish with the three of them, we shall all be at the same level. (*Grips his lower lips with his upper teeth and continues*). They have entered my den. The easiest way to crash is to start

fighting me. What is it that men hate to hear? Shey, Honourable is feasting his eyes on a territory that is already booked. (*Smiles*). Honourable's dominion must collapse. Next. Demolish Shey Ghamogha's authority. Who knows? A traditional cabinet reshuffle may favour me. My son must take back what belongs to him. What next? Strategies. Incriminating insinuations. Misalliances. Alliances. Yes. Venom delivers its blows more successfully through love and alliances. It wears the robes of love but stings with the claws of vengeance. Revenge rides faster on the back of love. Hate courses faster on wings of love. It is in love that harsh plans are hatched (*nods*). This is my turn to get rid of the injury. I know how well to play the game. I will stop at nothing till I beat Satan's records. The destination must be what completes the objectives (*smiles and walks out*).

Scene VI

Shey Ghamogha's Courtyard

Shey Ghamogha: *(Tries hard to remember)*. “Shey Ghamogha. You are a King Maker. You are a First Class Chief. A hero does not crash without relics of the crash”. *(Muses)*. How can I remain a man when she is the owner? *(Shakes his head)*. That land is my manhood. I am a title-holder of no mean standing. A hero leaves behind relics of the crash when he quits the scene. I am not the type of being that crashes without relics of the crash. I want to leave traces of my own journey before the curtain comes down. If I lose the fight, I lose the land. Authority will abandon me. Once authority divorces me, every other thing follows. Besides, the Headquarters has put First Class Chiefs on salary. If I allow myself to be dislodged from the position I wield as a first Class Chief, I lose my cap and salary I’m about to grab. The fowls and goats I receive for rituals will no longer be at my disposal. Rifem that I know very well will waste no time to drag his swollen goats to the palace for title lobbying. No. A man dies several times. I do not believe in failure.

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Average height, massive, cool looking, dark complexion, short hair, drained look; approaches Shey, observes ridges and furrows on his face and stops at a safe distance)*.

Shey Ghamogha: Where are you coming from? *(She is silent)*. One more time. Where are you coming from?

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, I’m coming from the palace.

Shey Ghamogha: Do I have another bed in the palace?

Mrs Ghamogha: At home I am a wife.

Shey Ghamogha: And out of home you are? (*Shakes his head*). Woman, did I also hear from your mouth that I am a man and a husband? Strange that the supposed husband is getting out of bed when the supposed wife is coming back from... (*shakes his head*) I know not where. Woman! When did this supposed husband last perform his duties as a husband? Woman! Who owns who in this house?

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household; certain things are best discussed in the bedroom. Let's go inside, please.

Shey Ghamogha: Inside where? Woman, you slept outside? Bare body? Why woman? Why?

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, if we don't talk, nobody pays attention.

Shey Ghamogha: What took the women and *Come no Gos* to the palace?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, the solution to our problems is the cause of our problems.

Shey Ghamogha: And what is that problem that could only be solved in the palace?

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, the vulnerable are marginalized. The women, the *Come no Gos* and the widows are the most affected. Society is making them more vulnerable. Women need a lot of attention.

Shey Ghamogha: How does the palace come in?

Mrs Ghamogha: When change comes from within, it is better appreciated and accepted.

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngiri!*

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. Women cannot think their own thoughts.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Louder than before*). This is *Kibaaka*!

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, *Kibaaka* has refused to evolve.

Shey Ghamogha: Nobody sings out of tone.

Mrs Ghamogha: Our behaviour is compatible with buried history.

Shey Ghamogha: There is only one landlord in this compound.

Mrs Ghamogha: We need change.

Shey Ghamogha: Does change come through a revolution? Tell me! You want to put yourself in the position of a victim when you're guilty?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, who is responsible for our absence on the high table?

Shey Ghamogha: Don't try to divert my attention. Woman, who is the character that sold land to you? And who repairs the damage?

Mrs Ghamogha: Traces of the sapped heritage will shock our children.

Shey Ghamogha: Do you know someone has got to pay for this and that person cannot be me?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. *Kibaaka* is sixty years behind time.

Shey Ghamogha: Are you aware that *Mwerong* is watching us? Do you know that if this red feather (*touches his cap*) is installed on another head, the beneficiary inherits everything I achieved including my wife and children?

Mrs Ghamogha: That's the more reason why the land should not bear your name.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Stretching his hand*). I want the Sale Certificate and any other paper that gives you legitimacy over that land now!

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey...

Shey Ghamogha: (*Cuts in*). Tradition is the soul of the land. It is not me speaking.

Mrs Ghamogha: Why should tradition stifle women's ambitions?

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngiri!*

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. We want to build *Kibaaka* for the *Kibaakans*.

Shey Ghamogha: *Kibaaka* has long been built. Live in what has been built before.

Mrs Ghamogha: Women want to live and not to endure.

Shey Ghamogha: Roles are assigned to women. Roles are not assumed by women.

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household. Look at my potentials and not at my sex.

Shey Ghamogha: Woman. Human potentials can never go beyond those of the sex to which he or she belongs. You heard me!

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my...

Shey Ghamogha: (*Cuts in*). You are venturing into male dominions.

Mrs Ghamogha: We need change.

Shey Ghamogha: What do you want to change? Your natural sex, or your bare chin?

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, when people feel hopeless and helpless, somebody has to do something...

Shey Ghamogha: (*Cutting in*). And that something implies becoming a man?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, everything favours the man.

Shey Ghamogha: Woman! I am a traditional priest and tradition-conscious.

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household. Is traditional law adequate enough to think for a society with people of different backgrounds and perceptions?

Shey Ghamogha: Woman, there is one and only one tradition here and that is the *Kibaaka* tradition. I have spoken to you as a husband can speak to a wife. Next time I will speak to you as an

institution.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. Tradition has created a problem that needs to be addressed.

Shey Ghamogha: Do you know that I am an existence? Do you actually know the difference between a character and a presence? Maayuh, I am sure you wouldn't like the outcome of a fight with the almighty tradition.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. What tradition is fighting is not me. Tradition is fighting achievements.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Stretches his hand)*. The land title now. And thereafter, the name of the person who sold the land to you. I doubt if Lukong sold that land to you, but if he is the one, you will have to tell me.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey...

Shey Ghamogha: *(Shouts)*. Lukong was found dead in his bedroom a few weeks after he resolved to sell his land. If you don't give me the Sale Certificate and reveal the identity of the person who sold that land to you, I will begin to think like other elders that you had a hand in his death.

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, are you accusing me of murder?

Shey Ghamogha: How do murderers look like? And what makes me think you cannot murder when you have a Land Certificate that you acquired mysteriously with the rightful owner dropping dead immediately thereafter?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey...

Shey Ghamogha: *(Cuts in)*. Without any further delay, I need those papers now.

Mrs Ghamogha: I want to keep my land.

Shey Ghamogha: If I give you land, whose powers am I

exercising; yours or mine? Tell me. (*She is silent*). Woman, do you want to challenge my manhood?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. We only want to sharpen and build.

Shey Ghamogha: Whose authority are you exercising?

Mrs Ghamogha: The Presidential Decree has untied the rope with which the woman was tethered.

Shey Ghamogha: Are you aware that *Kibaaka* is not in support of what you are injecting into the minds of innocent and good house wives?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, those who criticise me advertise me.

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngiri!* (*Shakes his head*). Woman. In *Kamangola*, the Head Quarters can rumble. In *Kibaaka*, it is only the voice of *Mwerong* that roars.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. How credible is *Mwerong* when all its members are men? (*Shey shrugs*). Can *Mwerong* represent the wishes of everybody when all its members are men? Can anybody criticize *Mwerong* when *Mwerong* is wrong? Shey. Isn't it obvious that it is the voice of *Mwerong* that continues to say a woman cannot own land?

Shey Ghamogha: Nobody has the choice of obeying or not obeying tradition.

Mrs Ghamogha: Why is tradition still a problem to the woman even when the Head Quarters has spoken?

Shey Ghamogha: We do not negotiate tradition.

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, listen to the cry of the woman.

Shey Ghamogha: Which is?

Mrs Ghamogha: Can there be moderation in certain areas of tradition?

Shey Ghamogha: We cannot rule *Kibaaka* on the weight of sentiments.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. Do people create cultures or cultures create people?

Shey Ghamogha: Do you actually love Shey Ghamogha?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. I relate to people in different ways.

Shey Ghamogha: Who will you rescue if MANDJARA and your husband were drowning simultaneously and you had the choice to save only one of them?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. Every woman has a responsibility outside the immediate home. A woman is just like a tree with many branches sucking from the same source. Shey, a mother who has fifty children has fifty experiences, fifty opinions and fifty problems. When a family grows in size, the price it pays for expansion is having more mouths to feed.

Shey Ghamogha: Woman! We do not eat and bite the finger that feeds the mouth.

Mrs Ghamogha: A finger that feeds the mouth with excreta deserves to be bitten off.

Shey Ghamogha: You are unroofing your own house and building another person's own with the very pieces.

Mrs Ghamogha: We are equally part of the house I want to build. Shey, we only want to build capacities...

Shey Ghamogha: At the cost of my authority?

Mrs Ghamogha: Why is it that women can't plan and achieve using their own methods?

Shey Ghamogha: Tradition is meant for people to obey.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, why was tradition made by men and for the interest of men? (*Takes a long breath*). Shey, give me a better reason why a woman cannot have her own land?

Shey Ghamogha: When you are tired of raging, release and relinquish the Land Certificate and the Sale Certificate to Shey Ghamogha!

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of...

Shey Ghamogha: (*Cuts in*). My word is my will. You heard me

(Turns swiftly and walks in).

ACT II

Scene I

They's Sitting-room

They Ghamogha: *(Installs himself on the cane chair. His wife perches on a stool. (Closes his eyes and tries hard to remember). “Use pillow diplomacy when all efforts have failed”. (Opens his eyes slowly and speaks alluringly). Maayuh, Mwerong is impatiently waiting for my reaction. Mwerong will personally supervise our departure from this compound if I allow a woman to own land. Woman, authority follows titles and dies with titles. I own this compound as long as I stay in power. We are living in a compound my father passed on to me. Remember, we have male children. Listen to me. A roofless man is worse than a barren reign. Woman, give me the Land and its papers.*

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, women need to create their own jobs.

They Ghamogha: Woman; that land is my manhood. Woman, refusing to give me the land title would mean taking off the thing I carry between my legs.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, that name “woman” has disqualified us from the job market. If we empower the women, they will become self-reliant; they will develop greater creative skills and the possibility of achieving financial independence will be guaranteed. Shey, women need a permanent platform to educate themselves and the community.

They Ghamogha: *(Stares piercingly into her eyes).* MANDJARA is misleading you.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, MANDJARA has a responsibility to

train people who will go to their communities and share their knowledge with others. We forwarded an application for a funding assistance already. We can only receive aid from our foreign benefactors if we can prove that we have a large land to host our projects.

(A voice is croaking outside. Shey and wife lift up their heads).

Baa Medzefen: *(Barges in).* As Biy Wiiba comot house day before today, na dis morning tam my eyes see she own. Shey, talk for you woman massa oh. Because if I catch woman for Shey for my house again, I go comot cutlass make ngomna hear we. *(Turns to go and stops).* Shey, if I see you woman for my door again, *Mwerong* go hear. *(Staggers away).*

Shey Ghamogha: *(Wipes his ears).* Woman, MANDJARA must cease to exist!

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, consider the significance of what we are doing.

Shey Ghamogha: Woman, if anything happens to my cap, you may not live to witness the burial of MANDJARA.

Mrs Ghamogha: Father of my household, our objective is to take women and the youths to a level where they are aware, responsible, and self-reliant. We only want to build their capacities. We need...

Shey Ghamogha: Society did not see you before creating tradition. Tradition was there yesterday; it is there today and will be there tomorrow.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, some decisions were wrong yesterday; they are still wrong today and will be wrong tomorrow.

Shey Ghamogha: Do you realize that I've been extremely tolerant with you? For a very long time now I

have spent lonely nights in bed while you sit on a table for endless hours, writing stupid letters to MANDJARA. All your activities have been at the expense of my red feather and domestic duties as husband; duties that you well know I cherish so much. Maayuh, when I permitted you to go to Weijing, I thought I was sending you to go and learn how to become a better house wife. But what have I got in return? You now lead a group of mad women with whom you flock around street corners like a colony of famished bees combing the beehive for honey. I thought that by now you should even be “General Mayuuh”. Instead, you still move under my identity. It is the madness you contracted from your travels that misled you into thinking that you can create groups and own land in *Kibaaka*. Over my dead body will it happen. (*A knock at the door. Shey cocks his head. The knock is persistent and louder than before*).

Shey Ghamogha:

(*Turns towards the door*).Your hands are not hard enough. Why don’t you use a hammer? Look for a hammer and break the door with at once. (*Turns to his wife*).Woman. Another Baa Medzefen is at the door. His own wife has certainly not come back home yet. (*The door opens slowly and Ability thrusts his head forward*).

Ability:

What’s going on here?

Shey Ghamogha:

Ability. All is well. Come right inside.

Ability rocking forward

Mrs Ghamogha:

Baa Ability welcome.

Ability:

Thank you. Shey Ghamogha, we were supposed to go...

Shey Ghamogha: *(Cuts in).* I almost forgot. *(Stands).*
Mrs Ghamogha: You have to eat first. *(Calling).* Kila, Kila, bring us some water.

(Enter Kila holding a jar of water. Her chest is tied round with a bandage).

Kila: *(Bends her knees as she greets).* Good day *baa* Ability.

Ability: My daughter, God bless you.

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Hangs her mouth open).* Kila, why do you bind your breasts?

Kila: *(Reticently).* Mami, there are stones inside. I don't like the stones.

Mrs Ghamogha: Who taught you that by binding breasts you can retard their growth?

Fomu: Mami, she heats stones on the flames and rubs her breasts with.

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Shakes her head).* Kila, don't iron your breasts again. Don't bind them again. That's a sign that you're already a woman. Go and wait for me in your reading room *(Kila leaves).* *Baa Ability,* make yourself comfortable. There's food on the table.

Ability: My intestines were already on a rampage. Wrap up the food. I'll take it along. *(Mrs Ghamogha wraps up the food in leaves and gives the bundle to Ability).* Thank you. We'll be on our way now. Stay well.

Mrs Ghamogha: It shall be well. *(Shey Ghamogha and Ability walk out).*

At a footpath.

Ability: *Errhrr.* Shey Ghamogha. Have you exhumed the identity of the person who sold land to her? D-d-did you find the Sale Certificate?

Shey Ghamogha: She is not ready to release the papers and

information about the seller.

Ability: Shey, you are an institution. Your word is the law and not a wish.

Shey Ghamogha: Ability, she's adamant. What do I do now?

Ability: *(Muses). 8th finals. No goal, no victory. (Stiffens his body, turns and looks behind, surveys the environment, tiptoes close to Shey as if trying not to be heard or seen and whispers).* Shey. Someone is feasting his eyes on your colony.

Shey Ghamogha: What do I do to grab that land before more people join the 'someone' to feast their eyes on the only colony I have?

Ability: *(Whispering).* Tell Honourable to leave your wife alone.

Shey Ghamogha: What do you mean?

Ability: Haven't you heard that as Honourable is being discharged from one lap, he is energetically admitted into another? Or am I the first to tell you that he can't keep the contents of his trousers under control?

Shey Ghamogha: Ability. Not with my wife. I know her.

Ability: Shey Ghamogha. Have you suddenly forgotten the strong defence Honourable mounted in favour of your wife? Have you forgotten how he dismantled all the strong evidence we brought against her? Were you not there when he flung insults at Ability in defence of your wife and her group? Were you under the influence of palm wine when the outsider targeted your words but defended your wife? Were your ears dead when he cunningly enlisted the support of Tarhnteh; just because he needed somebody to nod when he argued in favour of MANDJARA? Shey. Were you drugged when Honourable

deployed verbal strategies to overthrow our tactics? Were you not there when he speculated and resisted all the attacks we advanced against the women? Shey Ghamogha. Do you think it was for nothing that he targeted and struggled to crush every argument that surged from my lips in your favour? Have you forgotten that Honourable refused to surrender and almost stabbed my heart with insults? Do you still want to ignore the verbal terrorism that characterised our exchanges, and almost transformed the gathering into one of those deliverance moments in Prophet Joshufa's Religious Shrine? Have you abruptly forgotten how I threatened and thrashed his arguments that favoured no other person but your wife? Shey! Who else apart from Honourable said: *(mimicking)* "You might be the one losing your turn and thinking that the woman is losing her turn"?

Shey Ghamogha:

(Tossing his head).

Ability:

Honourable alone raised an objection when we decided that our loins will begin a five days fast in protest against the women's recent activities involving land. Now, Shey, tell me. Do you think Honourable would perform all these services to your wife for free? *(As Shey looks up and begins to ponder, Ability smiles a disguised smile).*

Shey Ghamogha:

Ability. Maayuh can be everything else except being unfaithful.

Ability:

Honourable makes luring insinuations every time he sees your wife.

Shey Ghamogha:

What? How?

Ability: She often situate herself where Honourable would easily locate her.

Shey Ghamogha: How do you know?

Ability: Why is it that at whatever time I trail and trace Honourable loitering around the vicinity of your compound, your wife is always in the kitchen? Shey, on five good occasions I found Honourable lingering and whistling around your wife's kitchen at odd hours. She positioned herself where she could easily be located. I can read postures. When it comes to palm bush affairs, the woman positions herself. The man locates her.

Shey Ghamogha: Ability, tell me it's a dream.

Ability: Shey, I met Honourable lurking behind your wife. I can't say whether or not she was conscious of the enticing role her hips were playing under the penetrating eyes of Honourable. What I know, for sure, is that as she wiggled her hips, and caused her zigzag buttocks to move up and down, (*stimulatingly*) and waddle from side to side; Honourable smiled, closed his eyes partially and licked his lips. Don't betray me. I don't want your wife to hate me.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Stares expressionless and speaks*). What do I do now?

Ability: Pray.

Shey Ghamogha: Pray? Is that all?

Ability: Shey, remember that you once challenged Honourable in the political game and ended up in New Gate.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Louder*). Should I wait until I become a foster father before I can act? No! No! Ability. That stranger will regret my reaction. And as for

Maayuh, she will pack out of my house this very day when I return home.

Ability:

(Cuts in). Not so soon. You don't have evidence yet. Leave everything to me. I will watch them more closely and give you information. I will make sure that you watch them live. Shey. Your wife should not know about our game plan.

Shey Ghamogha:

(Musing). If I question my wife, I betray Ability. My reaction will be dangerous as soon as there is evidence that Honourable has an affair with my wife.

Ability:

Shey. I can set up Honourable and cause an alarm that will leave the Headquarters with no choice than transfer him to Kurawa.

Shey Ghamogha:

How will that be done?

Ability:

A simple petition is enough to bulldoze Honourable out of *Kibaaka*. Once we stir ample suspicion by exaggerating his possessions, he will be audited and fined by FONAC *(Shey smiles)*. The following day Head Lines and Top Stories will dramatize his level of corruption. Either he becomes a tenant in New Cage or his name is top on the transfer list. If we fail, we set him up and conduct *Mwerong* to strip off his title. I can serve as a good substitute for the continuation of his traditional term of office. *(They fold their fingers and knock the back of their hands against each other's as they talk and laugh in excitement)*. We're late for the meeting. Let's hurry. *(End)*

Scene II

Mrs Ghamogha's Kitchen

(Mrs Ghamogha is making a fire in the kitchen. Biy Wiiba crawls in).

- Biy Wiiba:** *(In a whisper).* Is anybody around?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** I hope there's no problem.
- Biy Wiiba:** You mean you have not heard?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** About what?
- Biy Wiiba:** *(Whispers).* She is tired of eating fufu and *njamanjama* every day.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** I don't understand.
- Biy Wiiba:** Shey and *Aginir* are planning to join.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Join? How?
- Biy Wiiba:** He said it.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** To who?
- Biy Wiiba:** Ability.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Ability? *(Shakes her head).* I finance the children's studies alone. I now know where he buries the money he makes from the sale of coffee.
- (Shakes her head again).* Mami Biy, where exactly did you find them?
- Biy Wiiba:** I was returning home when I saw them drinking. I took the path below the bar to avoid being noticed. Something happened. I saw people in your land. They had knives.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** God forbid. Where do I start? What were they doing there?
- Biy Wiiba:** They were carrying arms of trees. I hid in the bush. As the rain increased, they ran away.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Did you recognise any of them?
- Biy Wiiba:** Kilamakwa was there. The boy who calls nobody father was there. I am talking about Kiboh, the son of *Aginir*.

Mrs Ghamogha: Rally other women. We are going to the palace right now.

Biy Wiiba: The palace is 'shivering'.

Mrs Ghamogha: Mami Biy, we have to plant markers on that land tonight.

Biy Wiiba: If we pay Mbiame and Dinka; they will do the job. I know where they drink every day. Let us find them. *They steal themselves into the dark).*

Scene III

They Ghamogha's Sitting-room

They Ghamogha: Woman, I just want you to know further reasons why strangers and women cannot own land in *Kibaaka*. My father told me the story. Your origin is the real problem. Your great great grand-father-Fon Ngoumoun came from Mikari. He had three children-Sohngon, Kinchara, and Biafara Kinsham. Sohngon, the princess, was the first child but was a woman and naturally disqualified for the throne. According to the customs of Mikari, the first male child from her womb was to be heir apparent to the throne. Because her privileged position in the family means the king must come from her womb, conflict started and flourished. One of the daughters of Sohngon travelled to the other side of the river in the Land of the Rising Sun and married a Wise Man. The Wise Man who married her came to *Kibaaka*, discovered forests and gave a hat, a pair of short Khaki trousers, a bottle of wine, a mirror and a packet of bonbon to *Nginyam* Tchindzev in exchange for virgin lands and forests. After signing papers conferring ownership of Habassi and Hunting Region to the white skin man, other intruders flew in from The Land of the Rising Sun like bees tracing honey. The disappearance of our forest and especially Hunting Region affected everybody. Hunters lost their jobs. An alarm was raised. *Mwerong* immediately went to the market at mid-day, summoned everybody and gave the message that henceforth, women and

strangers will not own land in *Kibaaka*. It was believed that the people whose presence almost led to the extinction of our language and woods were led to *Kibaaka* by a woman.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Shey, we should be able to come up with a new vocabulary that appreciates efforts. I see Command in their language and epic works. That is how people emerge. That is why we say heroes never die. All you tell me in this house is about *Mwerong* and traditional inhibitions on women and strangers...

Shey Ghamogha:

Ngiri! (Stands). Woman. Were there no luminaries in *Kibaaka* before the arrival of the people from the other side of the river? Were they empty calabashes waiting to be loaded with water? Woman. Was there no language in *Kibaaka* before the arrival of the Wise Men? Was the language we spoke at the time insufficient to address our needs? Was there anything that did not have a name and needed people from the land of the Rising Sun to come and give it one? Woman, if our own linguistic tentacles were inadequate to accommodate our ways and world views, how then, did our roaring luminaries create people and societies? I am referring to heroes and Baobabs like Lofon the Vanguard, Monarch Chin Chabe the Visionary, Jesus Wathongo the Cobra, King Mayi Kwe the Den, Oracle Ngongkeme the Beehive, Prophet Anski Onassom the Bee, Jumkenjum the Custodian, Lobe Tabuke the Fortune-teller, Queen Margafuh the Carver, Tasong Linnchami the Debia, Tapper Moyono the Roots, Ateba Visong the Viper, Pepie Ngomkome the Seer,

Bipoko Tashim the Story teller and Malembong the Storm. Tell me. If we had no language of our own, how did these Oracles and Soothsayers speak to the world? What makes you think that *Kibaaka* people needed another language? *Errhrrr*? Do you even know the price we're paying for embracing the people from the other side of the river? (*She is silent*). I am not surprised you can't see the ruin Wise Men caused your own family.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Shey, before the Wise Men came to *Kibaaka*, a girl of five years old would gladly go in as the tenth wife of a man of ninety years. Women dragged and pulled their female children out of beds to shrines where they were castrated like lambs. My mother told me about a case that bled to death. Shey, it is thanks to the Wise Men that women can now say 'no' to unhealthy customs. More value should be given to the Wise Men as the source of strength and inspiration for *Kibaaka* women...

Shey Ghamogha:

Stop it now! (*Muses*). I know what to do. (*Pierces into his wife's face briefly and walks out*).

Scene IV
Shey Ghamogha's Sitting-room

(Mrs Ghamogha empties the contents out of her hand bag on the floor and begins to rummage. Shey sits on his chair. A knock at the door).

Enter Bame, Fomu and Kila

Kila/Bame/Fomu: Good afternoon *baa*. Good afternoon *mami*
(Shey Ghamogha nods).

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Looks at the time).* Welcome back.

Kila: *(Kila stretches her hand forward to give money to her mother).* Mami, keep it for me.

Mrs Ghamogha: What is it? *(Collects the money).* Who gave you five hundred francs?

Kila: Mami Regular.

Shey Ghamogha: Where did you meet Regular?

Bame: We left school and went to her house...

Shey Ghamogha: *(Cutting in).* You went to where? *Ngiri!* A woman who is available to anybody? *(Commotion outside, followed by footsteps causes Shey to stop, arches his head, listens briefly and continues).* Maayuh! Didn't I tell you I don't ever want my children anywhere near a woman who is accessible even to bird hunters? *(Turns to his children).* I don't want to hear that my children were seen anywhere near that woman you call Regular. Go to your room now! *(They leave).* *(Shey begins to cough. In the intervening time Ability, who has just hunched at the door to clean drops of blood from the toe he has just knocked against a stone, hears Regular's name and bends forward to eavesdrop).*

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, why do you hate my sister so much? Why?

Shey Ghamogha: Is it not Regular who has taught you how to become a man? Maayuh, who does not know

Regular in *Kibaaka*? Who does not know that her expertise in wrenching fruits from the womb is unrivalled? Have you ever heard the cry of a baby in her house? Is she living with her husband? Is that the category of woman my children should associate with? Maayuh! I don't want my children anywhere near a woman who is available to people who cannot discipline the contents of their trousers like the likes of Ability!

Ability:

Hei! (Carries hands over his head).

Shey Ghamogha:

If Ability was still in the Military, he should be planning to celebrate his 40th anniversary in marriage. Unfortunately, he is moaning his 30th anniversary in separation. Maayuh. Ability's frustration can be traced to MANDJARA and the likes of Regular. (*Ability screws up his face*).

Ability:

(*Shey coughs incessantly while Ability ponders outside*). Is this the kind of CV Shey Ghamogha designs and appends my name on? A Report Card that bleeds like a slaughter house? A Report Card that drains like a delivery cavity? Could this have left his lips? (*Shakes his head*). How is Shey Ghamogha affected by what I do with the contents of my trousers? Have I informed his wife about his relationship with Agnes? (*Snaps his fingers in the air*). Shey Ghamogha will have to pay for this! Quarter finals matches begin (*staggers stealthily away*).

(*Footsteps outside. A knock at the door and Tarhnteh comes in*).

Tarhnteh:

(*Greeting*). Son of the soil!

Shey Ghamogha:

(*Laughing*). Tarhnteh, you're welcome. Make yourself comfortable.

Tarhnteh:

(*To Mrs Ghamogha*). Our daughter, I greet you.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Baa Tarhnteh, you're welcome to our house

(Tarhnteh smiles).

Tarhnteh: Our wife, the Council of Elders requests that you suspend all the activities of your group on the disputed land until *Mwerong* has spoken.

Mrs Ghamogha: Messenger of our land. Listen to the cry of the woman. Listen to me and take my voice to the Fathers of our land. Take my voice to *Mwerong*. Plead on our behalf...

Shey Ghamogha: Stop it now...

Tarhnteh: No! Shey Ghamogha, let her speak.

Mrs Ghamogha: My husbands, thank you so much. I just want you to know why we started. I just want to tell you what MANDJARA is doing and for who.

Tarhnteh: You may proceed.

Mrs Ghamogha: Thank you. Messengers of our land. *Kibaaka* is littered by fruits of bush affairs. Grandfathers hang around granddaughters. Girls put on attires that expose areas of the body that should be veiled. On every footpath, you catch a glimpse of an imposing body either still invading or withdrawing stealthily and gliding straight into a parked car. That is why MANDJARA became involved. I will tell you more. We carried out a project in Youtrivoriginia and Pourindegenia. Our information was sourced through observation and interviews. We talked to students and recorded their experiences. We had opportunities to observe behaviours and attitudes. Female students told us how they are often forced to trade their bodies for marks *(stops)*.

Tarhnteh: Proceed.

Mrs Ghamogha: One incident I saw really brought down tears from my eyes. Behind a tall building; they call

it Amphi. A tall man stood firm with his back glued to the wall of the building. He bent the top half of his body forward and down. He was gluttonously gripped by his companion. His arms rested on her naked shoulders. Their foreheads were joined. Their lips were sewn together. Their eyes were partially closed. Slightly above the ground, the tall figure bent his right knee to form what looked like a backward triangle and cemented the floor of his right foot against the wall. One could barely see the top half of the body of the other figure as the lower part of her body had disappeared behind the triangle. Just when he submerged, we emerged (*shakes her head*). The only impression of two separate flesh and blood characters was the two heads sleeping above their shoulders.

Tarhnteh:

What did you do?

Mrs Ghamogha:

MANDJARA is the solution.

Tarhnteh:

How?

Mrs Ghamogha:

We removed a camera and took photographs of the two fellows. We wanted to diffuse the information to policy makers and the authorities of that school. We heard sad stories. Female students sleep with mentors in exchange for Sexually Transmitted Marks. The most humiliating was the revelation that table tops are often transformed into beds and the marks earned depend on how far one conforms to the rules of Sexually Transmissible Marks. We learned that on table tops Currencies wait impatiently to validate UV'S in order to survive the shame of remaining on the waiting list as a testimony of

failure. My husbands, you know the implications on the female student when hard work is compromised for sexual favours *(pauses)*. *(Tarhnteh throws his hands apart and shakes his head)*.

Shey Ghamogha:

What are UVS?

Mrs Ghamogha:

Subjects taught in higher institutions of learning. We were also informed that most victims of Carry Forward Sessions are either the poor ones or those who would not wage their womanhood to traders in exchange for Sexually Transmissible Marks *(Tarhnteh shakes his head)*. We were told that students who are unable to raise funds required to secure the chances of moving to a superior level often carry swollen bags behind traders in anticipation of favours.

Tarhnteh:

This cannot continue.

Mrs Ghamogha:

That's not all we heard and saw. Another informant said inside Amphi 10,000; traders in suit and tie linger with wallets trading marks. We visited the Department of Survival of the Wealthy. Like a detective dog locating the direction of its prey, a young girl could be seen targeting her victims with insinuating glances. We saw another loitering behind a young adult dressed in the late 50s fashion suit.

Tarhnteh:

Something must be done.

Mrs Ghamogha:

We heard shameful stories. Inside Amphi 20,000, another Mentor, struggling to mask the obvious spends three hours on the same topic: "When I was in Bifaga State University; when I was in Mountain State; when I was in Shavard".

- Tarhnteh:** Is the Headquarters aware?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** We sighted one girl loitering behind another Sir. She was wearing a two inch blouse that covered only the top half of her body, holding onto the breast line two straps which extended to and behind the neck leaving the upper back and shoulders vastly bare. Slightly below the waistline was a two inch skirt that revealed sneezing laps above strained muscles. A frowning stomach interspersed with stressed up wrinkles was visible. One could see a rope that extended to and around the waistline. It was joined behind by a strap connecting the rope to the furrow where it disappeared and separated the buttocks into two worlds inhabited by ridges. Her thin v-shaped top revealed what looked like mumphs-stricken jaws emerging from cocoon bags.
- Tarhnteh:** *Hei!*
- Mrs Ghamogha:** My husbands, what do you think would likely happen if an uninhabited region is advertised to explorers?
- Tarhnteh:** The answer is obvious. Tangled paths are likely to be replaced by roads (*Mrs Ghamogha nods and smiles*). Mother of children, how can your findings help the victims?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Messenger of our land, MANDJARA cannot be silent when schools are transformed into sects and commercial centres.
- Tarhnteh:** Our wife, we have listened to you. We will take back your message to the Council of Elders. Meanwhile you are expected to obey the injunctions.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Tarhnteh, stopping our activities on the land is stopping our progress in the direction of

helping the victims (*Shay Ghamogha frowns*).
Tarhnteh: Our Wife. I am only a messenger. I will be on my way now. (*Shay escorts Tarhnteh out of the yard*).
Mrs Ghamogha: (*Musing*). What about precipitating the procedure for transfer of land ownership to MANDJARA? Seek advice from Hallen Johnson? (*Nods*). I will meet and talk with her before going out to join other women for the Women's Day celebration.

Scene V

In Front of Regular's House

(A tall woman with long wave-like hair that falls sparingly on her back holds the handle of a puffy bag while looking at her watch at short intervals. Her sunburnt jaws look as if they are constantly scrubbed with iron sponge. Her lips are red. She wears a gold chain on her ankle. Her small fitting blouse on short trousers renders her younger than her age. As the pair of trousers is short and tight across the hips, the joint which connects the buttocks to the upper part of her body reveals a golden chain hemmed round her waist. Ability spring out from a foot track, lurches forward; charges unevenly towards Regular, stands on his left toes with the heel of his left foot lifted off the ground, leans on his staff, shakes his head, wipes his forehead with the back of his hand and frowns).

- Regular:** I hope nothing has happened.
- Ability:** You don't know the part of Ability that Shey Ghamogha has stabbed.
- Regular:** Stabbed?
- Ability:** He hates you. He even vowed to bury his wife and children alive should they be found anywhere around your house.
- Regular:** What?
- Ability:** He said you open your door to all categories irrespective of date of birth, place of birth, height, size, weight, structure, nationality, marital status, ancestry, religion, *(makes a sign of the cross)* physical appearance, medical history, moral implications, cultural restrictions, intension, side effects...
- Regular:** *(Cuts in).* Shey Ghamogha has stepped on the tail of a cobra!
- Ability:** He even said you have a reputation for being the most regular of all the Regulars in *Kibaaka*.
- Regular:** *Hei!*
- Ability:** Baby, he even called you a regular food for

regular customers.

Regular: That failure is daring Regular.

Ability: Who knows what will happen to your sister's land when Agnes eventually monopolises Shey Ghamogha.

Regular: Mami Biy Wiiba said it. You just confirmed it.

Ability: *Orrhrrr!* Regu, do something. Don't spare Shey. Render his manhood impotent and useless before he renders your sister a marital miscarriage! (*Regular nods*). Go to Baa Kimfoy and ask for body magic. Take it. The right dose is the right solution. It must be put in food that Shey will eat alone. If he eats the portion and visits Agnes, he will remain there. Once we inform *Mwerong* that an abomination has been committed in the land, *Mwerong* will waste no time to decide his destination. And that would be Kiyungndzen; the land of exiles (*they laugh*).

Regular: (*Ability's words seem to evoke memories of her late mother's last words as she closes her eyes slowly*). "Regular, this is the end of the road for me. The voices I hear now are seven hills away from *Kibaaka*. The first seed of my womb is in the distant land. She will come back. Greet her for me when you see her. I am about to start another journey. I do not regret because you are there to clear the bush for others to pass. Take care of my children. They are now your children. Take care of Maayuh. The big book she knows has changed her ways. She may have problems with the people of *Kibaaka*. I can now go in peace". (*Opening her eyes slowly*). Shey Ghamogha will know what I can do the day I return from Lamenda (*Ability nods*).

Please, don't let him harm my sister. Watch his moves till I come back.

Ability: Don't tell anybody that I was here; not even your sister. *Erhrr?* (*She nods*). Good. In that way nobody will suspect our game plan.

Regular: Exactly.

Ability: Baby, our mission is incomplete until you inform your sister about her husband's unrivalled explosive interest in extra-marital erotic activities.

Regular: I'll be a faithful reporter (*They smile as they exchange glances*).

(*A bus scrambles forward, hoots and halts. Regular drags her bag forward, gets on the bus and waves her hand. Ability waves his hand as the car howls and rolls away*).

Ability: Mental magic. Goals are victories. (*Smiles and limps off*).

ACT III

Scene I

Shey Ghamogha's Courtyard

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Looks at her wristwatch*). Kila, hold the edges together. Rub soap all over. Keep the soap away. Now, rub the dress with the palms of your two hands (*bends forward to assist*). Kila, I planned to go to one office. I will soon leave.

Kila: *Mami*, I am tired now.

Mrs Ghamogha: Will you stop complaining. Who are you taking after? *Errhrr* Kila?

Kila: *Mami*, call Fomu to come and work too. He is only doing sliding.

Fomu: I will beat you if you call my name again. Call my name again and see!

Mrs Ghamogha: Fomu! Why do you threaten to beat your sister? Is that the way I brought you up? *Errhrr*? By the way, what's your job description for this week?

Fomu: I am cleaning dishes and dusting the windows every morning. I'm also splitting firewood and checking fowls and goats every evening.

Mrs Ghamogha: Who is assigned to sweep the yard and scrub the floors this week?

Fomu: Bame. He's working inside already.

Mrs Ghamogha: Join him. Go inside and keep your room orderly. I don't want to find books lying scattered on the bed again. Teach Kila how to arrange books on the bookshelf. Check her school bag and remove dirt or any unwanted stuff. Kila. Did your teacher give you homework?

Kila: Yes *mami*. He gave us an assignment in

mathematics.

Mrs Ghamogha: Have you done it?

Kila: No.

Mrs Ghamogha: Why?

Kila: *Mami*. I am a girl. I want to study English Language and home economics. I can't do well in mathematics (*Fomu nods*).

Mrs Ghamogha: Who told you that?

Kila: Fomu. (*Mrs Ghamogha shrugs her shoulders*).

Fomu: Girls cannot do calculation. It is difficult. In our class, almost all the boys do mathematics. Majority of the girls attend Home Economics course when it is time for maths lessons. Our teacher does not even ask questions to girls when he teaches mathematics because they would give wrong answers (*Mrs Ghamogha shakes her head*).

Kila: It's true. The boys usually laugh at us when we give wrong answers during mathematic lessons. They even call us names.

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Shaking her head*). Fomu, Kila. Girls can do well in mathematics if they have the right orientation at the right stage. Kila, you can. *Errhrrr?* (*Kila nods*). Anybody can do well in maths. What is needed is the right orientation and the right formular. I was the best student in mathematics and physics when I wrote the London Certificate of Education, but I'm a woman. (*As Kila is more alert and nods keenly, Fomu opens his mouth wide*). Yes. If I could, then any woman can. Don't listen to misleading impressions. People should not channel your mind to their own preferences. I will talk to your teacher. Go back inside. Fomu, assist her when you finish your house work. Teach her

methods and not answers. Go now and work.
(*The children leave. Ability approaches and stops in front of Mrs Ghamogha. She bends forward to greet.*)
Baa Ability, welcome. (*Ability bends the upper half of his body and looks around cautiously. Mrs Ghamogha assumes he intends to see Shy*). He's making a small fire in the kitchen to warm himself up. I'm sure you will like to join him there.

Ability: (*Places his forefinger vertically on his mouth, looks around suspiciously and speaks in a low tone*). Errhrr. I'm coming all the way from my palm bush, the one near your land. (*Snaps his fingers and points to the direction of the contested land*). When is enough enough?

Mrs Ghamogha: I hope there's no problem?

Ability: The pillars around your land are hardheartedly wrenched off.

Mrs Ghamogha: What?

Ability: Goats are feasting on your crops. (*Shaking his head and lamenting*).

Mrs Ghamogha: Feasting?

Ability: (*Whispers*). Anybody would think those misguided creatures had a feast. (*Mrs Ghamogha opens her mouth*). I recognised the goats.

Mrs Ghamogha: You did?

Ability: (*In a whisper*). Agnes was lurking about in the bush. The goats were exactly like the ones I often find around the vicinity of her compound. I can recognise the footprints of her son's goats.

Mrs Ghamogha: Agnes again.

Ability: Her head kept nodding with satisfaction as goats feasted on your crops.

Mrs Ghamogha: What is her problem?

Ability:

She wants your husband and your land. She wants to secure land for that product of footpath affairs she calls son. (*Mrs Ghamogha shakes her head*). I know how you feel. But, errhrr, we can work out a game plan. Leave everything to me. *Errhrr!* This is the game plan. Don't tell anybody that I was here. Not even Shey. If he hears that I mentioned the name Agnes, he will hide a lot of things which you need to know and take precaution. (*She nods*). Good. From now on, whatever I do, or say, is for your sake. (*She nods*). Rush to your farm first. Hurry. Go right away if you want to see your crops alive. Hurry. If you are not smart, I am sure by the time you get there, you will meet but pregnant animals. I'll be on my way now. (*As she turns and paces away towards her farm, Ability sticks out his tongue at her, swerves, totters towards the kitchen, drops his cutlass carefully at the corner of the kitchen wall, stands on tiptoe and whispers*). Shey. Shey. Shey.

Shey Ghamogha:

(*Emerges from the kitchen and greets.*) Ability Wangiri. (*Ability screws up his face and remains silent*). I hope nothing bad has happened.

Ability:

There's something I came to tell you.

Shey Ghamogha:

What is MANDJARA planning to do again?

Ability:

I saw mother of children sneaking away towards the direction of Hallen Johnson's compound. As I was afraid they might be planning to go to the palace again, I hid in a nearby bush where the view of Hallen Johnson's compound could be opened to me. From that position, I crawled towards her house and eavesdropped in their conversation.

Shey Ghamogha:

Wait. Wait. Did you say you saw mother of

children with Hallen Johnson in her compound?

Ability: When did I become a liar?

Shey Ghamogha: This is witchcraft!

Ability: Shey, your wife said Agnes is your favourite meal. (*Shey sticks out his tongue*). She said you cannot pay your children's school fees. She vowed she will never consent to relinquish her grip over her land. She asked Hallen Johnson to use her authority and stop you from seizing her land. She even called you a failure.

Shey Ghamogha: My wife told me she planned to go somewhere. She even said she was going to assign the children to wash dirty clothes. That's where I left them.

Ability: She was wearing *Kaba*.

Shey Ghamogha: Exactly!

Ability: If mother of children can deceive you and go somewhere else; who knows whether next time the somewhere else would not be Honourable.

Shey Ghamogha: *Ngiri!*

Ability: Be smart. Do something before they take that land or even your wife from you. Act fast.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Lifts his head and gapes blankly at the sky in silence*).

Ability: Stop being stingy with your slaps. You have the traditional court. Besides. The thing you wield between your thighs is a disciplinarian. Marry another woman. That is the only way to humble a stubborn wife. I have taught you how to use your authority. I will feast my eyes on them more closely now and feed your ears with what you want to hear. Don't tell her I was here (*Shey nods*).

Shey Ghamogha:

Ability:

They will hate my reaction.

(Ability nods). I'll be on my way now. (As he lurches stealthily away, he sees a car approaching and stretches his neck. As if to get the glimpse of the person inside the car, he hops, crashes into the bush, squeezes himself between clusters of coffee trees where he has a full view of Shey Ghamogha's front door, rears up his head, crouches at first, and then, squats and waits as if anticipating a reaction from Shey Ghamogha when Barrister Hallen meets him).

Scene II

Shey Ghamogha's Courtyard

(A car boots persistently. Shey moves towards the approaching car and stops. The driver signals left, turns the car slowly and parks in front of Shey's compound. Ability sticks out his head to look, but shrinks behind the leaves as Barrister Hallen steps out and begins to move towards Shey).

Barrister Hallen: Hi sir. I am Barrister Hallen Shelley Johnson.

Shey Ghamogha: Where is my wife?

Barrister Hallen: Your wife?

Shey Ghamogha: You heard me.

Barrister Hallen: *(Opens her mouth).* I hope there's no problem, sir.

Shey Ghamogha: I know where to find her.

Barrister Hallen: *(Briefly thoughtful).* Well sir, I brought this letter for you. *(Stretches her hand and gives an envelope to Shey).* I'll be on my way now. Have a nice day, sir. *(She drives off).*

Shey Ghamogha: *(Reads the letter, flings it on the ground and hangs his mouth open. As Mrs Ghamogha emerges from the foot track, Ability stoops, jerks up his head, shrinks behind the leaves and waits till she has gone before he begins to rear his head up slowly again).*

Enters Mrs Ghamogha

Shey Ghamogha: Where are you coming from?

Mrs Ghamogha: I rushed to my farm...

Shey Ghamogha: *(Interrupts).* Liar! *(Ability nods).*

Mrs Ghamogha: Liar?

Shey Ghamogha: It's time I give you a correction that's going to make you behave like a woman. *(Ability nods).*

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, what's going on here?

Shey Ghamogha: What do you take me for?

Mrs Ghamogha: I don't understand?

Shey Ghamogha: What is it that you don't understand? The fact

that a woman belongs to one man, or the fact that a woman cannot own land?

Mrs Ghamogha: I actually guessed it was about land.

Shey Ghamogha: Do you think you can frighten me with pieces of rubbish like this one? (*Pointing to the letter on the ground*). When did you become such a wonderful schemer? (*Ability nods*). You told a lie and slipped away to meet Lawyer Johnson? You insulted my honour?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, these accusations are coming because you want to stop me from asking for the land certificate.

Shey Ghamogha: Woman, where are you coming from?

Mrs Ghamogha: Who destroyed the pillars?

Shey Ghamogha: Meeting. Dirty clothes. Pillars. Lawyer Johnson! Which version of your plot and subplots should I believe and why? Maayuh! Do you have an affair with Honourable?

Mrs Ghamogha: Stop it now!

Shey Ghamogha: One more time! Are you having an affair with Honourable?

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, I refused to be insulted.

Shey Ghamogha: (*Gapes open mouthed and begins to breathe heavily while Ability, at the other end, turns the flap of his ear almost folding it in with flat fingers and bends the upper part of his body forward*). Maayuh! You have disappointed me.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, why did you do it?

Shey Ghamogha: Give me the Sale Certificate!

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, it doesn't honour you if we take the case to the palace again.

Shey Ghamogha: Do a new land title that bears my name. (*With a broad smile, Ability snaps his finger in the air*). And if that is not done, I'm afraid, I shall be forced to withdraw the autonomous rights you

enjoy as the only wife of a Traditional Prime Minister.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey. Marrying many wives is not the only way of becoming a man.

Shey Ghamogha: Consider consenting to a timetable.

Mrs Ghamogha: Shey, if you choose to be counting wives, children and problems while your age mates are counting achievements, be ready to take responsibility for the choice you made.

Shey Ghamogha: The Sale Certificate now! Or else...

Mrs Ghamogha: I am not giving up.

Shey Ghamogha: The choice is no longer yours.

Mrs Ghamogha: The Sale Certificate is mine.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Roars)*. Is it because you come from a family of bastards and refugees that you feel you have no obligation to titles and tradition?

Mrs. Ghamogha: Shey, the prestige attached to land means any title titleholder who needs it should work hard to deserve it. *(Ability hunches over a branch, push the leaves to one side and kicks hard into the open air)*.

Shey Ghamogha: Guest! Bastard! Stranger! *(Clutches his hand onto his cap)*. The status and bravery attached to this feathered cap should match the essence!

Mrs Ghamogha: Some people are brave and famous in their emptiness. I celebrate achievements and not titles and red feathers.

Shey Ghamogha: *Pah!*

Mrs Ghamogha: You slap me?

Shey Ghamogha: I will do it again if you don't zip up that mouth! Refugee! *(She crashes onto the ground and screams aloud as Shey kicks her repeatedly. Ability kicks his leg in the air, hobbles over the grass, hops into the footpath and paces to the scene. Shey's roaring voice and the petrifying cries of his wife attract*

neighbours, children and Biy Wiiba who rush in to rescue the later. Shey grabs her hand, drags her in and hurls her across the floor. Ability grips Shey by the waist). Talk now. Talk about titles that you don't celebrate! Guest! Bastard! Stranger!

Mrs Ghamogha:

(Crying). The law will fight my battles.

Shey Ghamogha:

Which law? If you drag a Traditional Priest to court, you have dragged tradition to court. There is nothing you can do. *(The neighbours construct an impenetrable barrier between Shey and his wife). We'll see who owns the land title. (Shey walks out of the sitting room, fuming in anger. Ability follows Shey outside and tries to console him. Their attention is tilted towards Nchiylav who comes running up the path. Holding beads, staff and cap in his hands, he staggers forward, stops in front of Shey Ghamogha, and hands them to him gasping).*

Shey Ghamogha:

(Glances at the beads, staff, cap and speaks). I know why you are here. Inform nobody about it (Nchiylav nods). Go back to the palace. I'll be there right away. (As Nchiylav turns and staggers away, Shey Ghamogha goes behind his house, returns).

Ability:

Shey, the women may take advantage of our absence and seclusion during the mourning period and plant more pillars on that land.

Shey Ghamogha:

You are right. Go and inform the Vigilante team to strengthen security.

Ability:

Consider it done. I'll be on my way now.

Shey Ghamogha:

You'll hear from me later.

(They disperse in different directions. Meanwhile Shey's wife is led into her sleeping room by Biy Wiiba and her children).

Mrs Ghamogha's Bedroom

Mrs Ghamogha:

(To her children). I want to be alone. (The children

withdrawn).

Biy Wiiba: *(Looks at Mrs Ghamogha's face)*. Regular must hear this.

Mrs Ghamogha: Mami Biy. I'm not sure I want to involve my family. I'm considering another option. The law will fight my battles. I will seek legal redress. *(Contemplative)*. But....what about the women? If I take my husband to court, will the women still stand by me? How will they take it if they hear that I want to take my husband to court? What would be the reaction of the women when they hear that I want to involve the court? A name they hate to hear. *(Pauses)*. God. Can a woman really speak?

Biy Wiiba: Maayuh, today is Women's Day. We are late.

Mrs Ghamogha: My God! Mami Biy, thank you, I almost forgot.

Biy Wiiba: Maayuh, the pillars we planted on our land are damaged.

Mrs Ghamogha: What?

Biy Wiiba: I also heard that the palace is shaking. We don't know what might happen to our land if the sun travels to sleep behind the mountains.

Mrs Ghamogha: Our pillars are damaged. *Mami Biy*, suspend all other plans. Our priority areas should be the celebrations and planting of pillars. We have sticks. Go ahead. I'll meet Lawyer Johnson before joining you.

Biy Wiiba: I'll be on my way now. *(They separate)*.

Scene III
At the MANDJARA Foundation

Mrs Ghamogha comes in. Her forehead is covered by a blood-stained bandage).

Women: *Hei!*

Woman: Are we safe?

Siveria Nyuydze: Who did this to you?

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Smiles).* Fellow sisters, don't be afraid. This is a sign that we are doing something. This is also the reason why our agenda for today has witnessed a slight modification. I'll be fine. *Eb woman eb!*

Women: *(The women answer in a chorus).* Ehrrrrrrrrrrrr!

Mrs Ghamogha: *Eb woman eb!*

Women: Ehrrrrrrrrrrrr!

Mrs Ghamogha: MANDJARA.

Women: Collective strength is victory.

Mrs Ghamogha: We have five main points: prayer; the celebration of the Women's Day; updates on the land issue; projects and the trip to the palace.

Mrs Ghamogha: Father, we thank you for creating MANDJARA seed sowing Association to serve the families, the community, and those with no opinion of their own; Father we started somewhere; and we're going somewhere; Help us in the fight to bring the change that is needed; We thank you Father for using us to do the work we're doing, We thank you Father for the progress made so far, and for what we're still to do; Eternal Rock of all ages, we command tradition to untie the woman. Father, remove all the fences on our way as we work for the women, for the

youths; for the widows; for the girl child; and for families.

Women:

Amen!

Mrs Ghamogha:

Father visit and comfort those who've lost everything in disasters and confrontations. Father, we look around *Kibaaka* in pains; Father it pains to see a woman sleep with her late husband's brother for fear of witchcraft; it pains to see a woman forced to drink water that was used to wash the corpse of her late husband for fear of tradition; it pains to find in-laws surge in to take over their late brother's property leaving the widow in the fangs and clutches of poverty; Father it pains to find a woman in a situation where she cannot have her husband when she needs him because the time table says it is another woman's turn; Father it pains to see a woman denied the right of choice to protect herself against diseases because tradition says a man belongs to many women; it pains to see a girl of 5years given in marriage to a man whose compound is flooding with women because her father is in need of a red feather; it pains to see a woman's face almost slaughtered because tradition says the woman owns the crops and not land; Father, tradition has stolen our rights; Father it pains to see a man snatch himself out of bed at midnight, sneaks into the toilet, and swerves into the kitchen to answer a telephone call from one Miss directed call; Father it pains to know that all the woman gets for passing sleepless nights both at home and on cold-baked floors in hospitals is having her husband's mobile phone invaded at

midnight by calls from persons who are always either business partners, or friends or one Miss directed call; it pains to see a widow twice punished because the owner of her hard-earned property has to be decided either by her in-laws or by tradition, and perhaps in favour of those who were sleeping when she was toiling; it pains to see a woman sent back to her parents because she cannot bear children for her husband and his family; it pains to know that a husband takes no consequences for being unable to give his wife a child. It pains to see ourselves as our own enemies. Eternal Rock of all ages, give voice to the voiceless; hope to the hopeless and set us free from every form of bondage, in Jesus's name, we pray,

Women:

Amen.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Sit down. Dear sisters, wipe your tears. Today is set aside to celebrate the International Women's Day. The theme of the event is: "Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence and Indignities against the Woman and the Girl Child". Fellow sisters, we are celebrating Women's Day decently. We are not only celebrating like women who have been oppressed. We are celebrating like women who have found their voice and freedom in MANDJARA and the law. We are celebrating like women who want to open the bush and clear the thorns on the path. (*Smiles*). Fellow women. I have good news for you. The light Command and the Head Quarters said will shine on women has finally shone. Decrees have broken chains at the doors of

cages. Decree number 95 has unbolted the lock with which our lips were sealed. By the strength of this declaration (*tosses a paper in the air*), traditional borders are broken.

Women:

Oooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Mrs Ghamogha:

(*Removes a magazine from her handbag and reads aloud*).

Creation of a Decree on the Rights of Women

Decree no. 48668179/019 of 09 September 18/092/95

The President of the Republic,
Mindful of the International Convention on Human Rights;

Mindful of law No. 1748/05 on the
Eradication of all Forms of Discrimination
and Restrictions on the basis of Sex, Race and
Origin.

Mindful of decree No. 8179/272 of 30 May 1872/1995 that created the Ministry of Women's Empowerment as amended by Decree no. 48668179/019 of 09 September 18/072/95

Hereby decrees as follows:

There shall be no form of distinction and discrimination against the woman. The woman shall enjoy all the Human rights and financial benefits that go with citizenship. Every woman shall have the rights to education and property ownership, including the basic economic, political, social and cultural rights; without distinction of origin, class, sex, religious and political affiliation.

Kamangola, September, 95.

NFORMBAM JEHSSI AJAHYI

Women:

Mrs Ghamogha:

Women:

Mrs Ghamogha:

Siveria Nyuydze:

Mrs Ghamogha:

Siveria Nyuydze:

Mrs Ghamogha:

Woman:

Women:

Mrs Ghamogha:

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Women: Oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Silveria Nyuydze: You talk about the end of silence. Is that not what the papers say? Have papers not said that before and yet little or nothing has been done?

Women: Orrrrrrrrro!

Mrs Ghamogha: Your fear represents what we are going through. Fellow women, we are expecting different results. Open the bush and trudge forward. Clear the thorns on the path.

Woman: Leader, the blood on your face is a warning that we should surrender.

Women: *Orrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!*

Mrs Ghamogha: It is a sign that something is happening. Our people used to say a tree that bears fruits receives the highest number of stones. Dear sisters, women must continue to put up a resistance. Your diversity should be our source of strength. MANDJARA must be the voice of the voiceless. The training we receive is one that prepares us to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Do not be afraid to be stabbed by thorns. It doesn't matter what they have concluded. I call on each of you to leave visible legacies and not visible gaps.

Woman: I am afraid of my husband. He hates *Come no*

Gos and MANDJARA.

Mrs Ghamogha:

We want to train the mind to see *Kibaaka* as a family. Our fight should be to develop minds before tribes. This is the kind of education MANDJARA provides. Thank you very much. Fellow sisters, it's now time for debate. The topic is: "Should Parents Arrange Marriages for their Children?" The person arguing for is on my left while the one arguing against is on my right. Take your positions on stage.

Enter the debaters.

(First speaker for begins).

Mrs Ghamogha:

Young people should be allowed to select their marriage partners. This is my position. 1. The Justice Dictionary defines marriage as a legally accepted relationship between a woman and a man in which they live as husband and wife, or the official ceremony which results in marriage". The above definition says nothing about arranged marriages. 2. Experience has shown that choices made by parents are motivated by either desire for power, friendship, materialism, selfish motives, or the customary tradition of giving marriage the characteristics of a market place.

Women:

(Applauding).

Mrs Ghamogha:

3. Discrimination, Divorce, separation, incompatibility, domestic conflicts and violence are often the results of negotiated and exchanged marriages. 4. In arranged marriages, merchants simply advertise their goods to potential bargain hunters. Sellers do not consider risks, personal taste or choice, emotional considerations, procreation, genes

or blood group factor. (*The women clap continually*). Fellow audience, if the choice of marriage partners should be determined by parents, some of who never went to school, what about the possibility or the high risk of being inherited by a brother-in-law if a woman in an arranged marriage lost her husband? (*The women clap continuously*). Dear audience. Free choice reduces the risk of transmitting diseases. Free choice brings understanding, love, peace, chains the families together and gives each individual value. Last but not the least, if love, common characteristics, children, ethics, morality, religion, biological factors and personal tastes are legitimate reasons that determine the choice of a partner, then individuals should be free to make their own choices. Thank you. (*Sits down as the women clap their hands and shout in joy*).

(First speaker against speaks).

Siveria Nyuydze:

(*Standing*). I dismiss all your points. The same dictionary you cited defines the youth as “an immature, uninformed and unripe person”. This is a clear indication that a youth needs a mature and wise self to think for them.

Women:

(*Applauding*).

Siveria Nyuydze:

Dear sisters. Parents can make the best bargain if they are allowed to choose marriage partners for their children since nobody would want to sell in the cheap market. (*The women clap their hands incessantly*). Dear audience. What my learned colleague said about the possibility of wife inheritance does not hold true in every culture. (*Waits for roars to abate*). Fellow

audience. We are all Africans. And nobody here would deny that in Africa, individuals do not get married. Rather. One family marries another. This implies that marriage should receive the blessings of our parents. If children should proceed with their free choices without their parents' blessings, such a marriage becomes synonymous to "come we stay". Now that you know the truth, do the right thing. Thank you for listening.

Women:

Orhr orhr orhr orhr orhr orhr orhr orhr!

Mrs Ghamogha:

Fellow sisters. We have come to the end of that interesting debate. Both sides performed very well. Clap for yourselves. (*Clapping*). Thank you.

Biy Wiiba:

How can a woman living in Mbohnchari benefit from what we are doing in *Kibaaka?* (*The women nod*).

Mrs Ghamogha:

We started somewhere. We're going somewhere. Our presence here today is a sign that there is something going on.

Siveria Nyuydze:

What is going to happen after meetings and celebrations?

Mrs Ghamogha:

Women will build women. MANDJARA is not a gathering for dancing and eating and clapping hands as many people think. MANDJARA has come to stay. An event of this nature will have no value if we end where we started. What we are still to do is more than what we have done. We will put in place a solid structure which will survive. We have planted the seed. If the seed must germinate and blossom, we must water it. We have each other. The story of women in programmed roles will fade from lips and pages.

Women: Oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Mrs Ghamogha: Our story must change. Double your efforts in the fight to build women. Your destination is victory. (*Women applauding*). It is time we stop looking for sympathy and look for opportunities to build ourselves. It is time we stop blaming people for our failure. It is time we make history and stop quarrelling with history. (*Applauding*). Women will build women. And to build women, we must build MANDJARA. You are contributing towards the building of an institution which you want to use yourself (*applauding*). When we pass somewhere, there must be signs that we were there.

Women: Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeees!

Mrs Ghamogha: The time has come to tell our own story.

Women: You will see the children of your children.

Mrs Ghamogha: One of us is not with her family. I am talking about Biiywong. I will fetch her and talk to her. Fellow sisters, if we must keep our land, we must plant pillars around the land again. (*Approving*). Yeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeees!

Women: Follow me. (*They start to walk out of the Hall through the main door*).

Mrs Ghamogha:

Scene IV
Enter Ability and the Vigilante Boys

Ability: (*Looks across the path*). What's going on there?
Kilamakwa: The women are planting pillars around that land.
Ability: MANDJARA should be ready to read her obituary in your hand writing.
Vigilante Boys: Consider it done.
Ability: (*Pointing*). Kilamakwa, make sure that beautiful woman lodges you. (*Kilamakwa nods*). Boys. Wear the masks! Storm in! Beat! Hurry!

(As the Vigilante boys rush forward to attack the women, Ability lingers behind unnoticed, dives over grass into the bush, shrinks behind a cluster of trees, and rears up his head to watch the scene from a distance).

Enter the Vigilante Boys Masked

(Screaming and commotion as the vigilante boys storm MANDJARA premises. A massive head masked guard bashes against a woman knocking her down as she tries to escape into the bush. Thuds of kicks from a bulking fellow send Mrs Ghamogha falling down. Lying on her back, she is crying for help as the guard is struggling to strip off her attire).

Mrs Ghamogha: Somebody help! Somebody help! Help!
Heeeeeelp!

Kilamakwa: Shut up! Cooperate! (*He pulls down his trousers, presses down firmly against her waist, pulls her legs apart with his knees and storms her laps. While the Vigilante hawks continue to swoop on the women, Siveria Nyuydze crawls around, glides slowly along the footpath unnoticed, and sneaks away to inform the Police. Stifled voices are heard as the guards trod on the buttocks of lengthened women. As Kilamakwa struggles with Mrs Ghamogha, the mask drops from his face causing Mrs Ghamogha to scream with surprise*).

Mrs Ghamogha: *Hei! Somebody help us! Help! Somebody heeeelp!*

***Enter the Police with guns followed by
Siveria Nyuydze***

(Unnoticed, Ability shrinks behind the leaves where he is wedged between branches, and begins to peep across the yard through the leaves. Pointing their guns at Kilamakwa and other Vigilante boys, the Police shout at the boys to put their weapons down).

Policeman: Drop those weapons! Hands up! Don't stir!
(The vigilante boys drop their machetes, knives, arrows and spears, and place their hands on their heads. The Policeman chains them with handcuffs. Turns and talks to Mrs Ghamogha).

Madam, what happened? *(She is silent)*. Don't be afraid. Speak.

Mrs Ghamogha: Those who should be arrested are arresting.

Policeman: Are you hurt?

Mrs Ghamogha: He held my neck down. I'm twice invaded.

Policeman: They will not get away with this. We're sorry for what has happened. *(The Police converse with the women one after the other while taking down notes. To the guys arrested)*. Move! Move! Move! If you try anything funny, I'll split your skull. Move! Move! *(The Police then conduct the culprits to their car and speed off)*.

Siveria Nyuydze: It should not be mentioned anywhere. Nobody should hear about it. Not even your husband. *(The women nod)*.

Mrs Ghamogha: What? Are these MANDJARA voices? Has MANDJARA been working to unseal or to seal lips? Are we still afraid to speak after the lock on the lips has been broken? Shall we still foster our own suppression by keeping our suppression secret? My sisters, are we not reproducing cultural voices? My kind, you

Speak not with your voices. What I hear are voices masked in the collective. I recognize the individuals but not the voices. You speak not for yourselves. You say just what our sex believes.

Siveria Nyuydze:

We are robbed again. What do we do now?

Mrs Ghamogha:

Go home. You'll hear from me later. (*The women start to disperse. She contemplates*). How will my husband take it if I inform him that I was raped? Will he still love me? Will that not destroy his inclination towards me? Will that not hasten his decision to take a second wife? What about society? *Kibaakans* do not distinguish between forceful and wilful sex. Will people not use it to insult me some day? (*Pauses*). I must listen to my fellow women. I must keep it secret. (*Pauses again*). But, would I say I'm married when I cannot share my plight with husband? (*Begins to walk home*).

Ability:

(*Step out of the bush*). I must see Shey and pre-empt any suspicion.

Scene V
Shey Ghamogha's Sitting Room

(Ability stops at Shey's window outside and lifts up his head).

Shey Ghamogha: *(Turns and fixes a gaze on the butchered gown his wife is wearing).* Who did this to you?

Mrs Ghamogha: Kilamakwa.

Shey Ghamogha: *Kilama* what? *(Ability brings his ears close to the window).*

Mrs Ghamogha: He also lumped himself into me and forced his way in.

Shey Ghamogha: Where? How? *Ngiri!* Did he succeed? *(She nods. He shakes his head and continues).* Kilamakwa has got to pay for this. Meanwhile, the elders should never hear about it. It shouldn't be mentioned anywhere.

Mrs Ghamogha: Why does everybody think such a crime against women must be kept hidden?

Shey Ghamogha: Shut up woman! Certain crimes are best endured than exposed. *(Walks out and stumbles on Ability who shrugs his shoulders on seeing Shey).*

Outside Shey's House

Shey Ghamogha: What are you doing here? *(Searches Ability's eyes)* Did you...?

Ability: That's what brought me here.

Shey Ghamogha: Kilamakwa forced his way into my wife.

Ability: What are you planning to do?

Shey Ghamogha: Nobody should hear about it.

Ability: Something like this is not good for your traditional career. If we negotiate very well, it can be buried.

Shey Ghamogha: Ability, you don't sound like a friend. Well, name your price.

Ability:

Drag her to the traditional den and take back your land. That's my price. (*Shey nod. Ability lurches away*).

Scene VI
At the Road Junction

Town Crier: People of *Kibaaka* land, people of *Kibaaka* land. All roads lead to *Ngainso* today. All roads lead to *Ngainso* today. *Mwerong* has spoken.

ACT IV

Scene I In the Traditional Council

(A big hall constructed with mud bricks imposes itself in front of an inner compound. Wave-like tracks of brown lines creep up the walls and disappear through the roofs. Sitting on two large well-designed bamboo stools are Shufai Nsaw and Shufai Sarbam. The Shufais are wearing zebra coloured long gowns that touch their feet. Sewn onto their thread-woven caps are beads of variegated colours. In the centre is an exceptionally huge round bottomed clay pot on a thickly plaited thatch grass stand. The pot has a long neck on top of which is a small round mouth. Sewn onto the neck of the clay pot is a mass of tassels. Close to the clay pot sits a rattle on another interweaved round stand. A small drum with a rope that goes round its neck twice leans against a trunk firmly planted into the ground in the middle of the hall. With red feathers quivering on their caps, some men, in a file, move towards the Shufais, and with cupped hands greet before sitting down. Hanging slantways across their chests are scabbards beautifully glued with animal skins. Present are villagers. The men are drinking palm wine from horns and calabash cups).

Shufai Nsaw:	Roots of Kibaaka land.
Elders:	<i>(Hands cupped, almost closing their mouths.) Mmmrrbrr.</i>
Shufai Nsaw:	Teeth of the elephant.
Elders:	<i>Mmmrrbrr.</i>
Shufai Nsaw:	Eyes and ears of the gods.
Elders:	<i>Mmmrrbrr.</i>
Shufai Nsaw:	Cult of traditional giants. We greet you.
Elders:	<i>Mmmmmmmrrbrrrr.</i>
Shufai Nsaw:	<i>(Looks around questioningly and speaks).</i> The face of Honourable Shu-Shey Wirkitum has not yet been seen. Taa Gheh.
Taa Gheh:	<i>(Stands up, cups his hands and greets.) Mmmrrbrr.</i>
Shufai Nsaw:	Is he breathing?

Taa Gheh: We have not heard women crying since the sun showed its face. *(Cups his hands)*. *Mmrrbrr.*

Shufai Nsaw: *(To Taa Gheh)*. You may sit down. Guards.

Guards: *(Cup their hands)*. *Mmmmmmmmm!*

Shufai Nsaw: Come forward! *(Giving them a peace plant)*. Give this to Honourable and return to us immediately.

Guards: *Mmrrbrr. (The guards storm out of the hall).*

Shufai Nsaw: Shey Ghamogha may come forward.
(Shey Ghamogha moves towards the Shufais with his hands cupped and held to cover his Mouth. He pulls out a cutlass from a scabbard that hangs slantways on his chest, wields it in the air twice, wedges it again in its sheath and drones).

Shey Ghamogha: *Mmrrbrr.* Their reign will be fertile. *Mmrrbrr.*
(The guards barge into the hall followed by Honourable).

Hon S Wirkitum: Hie folks. *(The elders murmur while Ability frowns).*

Shufai Nsaw: Honourable Shey Wirkitum. We greet you.

Hon S Wirkitum: Hie folks.

Shufai Nsaw: What held you behind?

Hon S Wirkitum: I'm just returning from Kamangola where I was called up to answer charges of embezzlement.

Shufai Nsaw: *Kwifon!*

Hon S Wirkitum: *Yeab.* Somebody wrote a letter charging me with misappropriation of state funds and requesting for my transfer to Kurawa.

Tav Banboye: *Hei!*

Hon S Wirkitum: The author of the allegation claimed that I swindled and diverted Government money into the wrong pockets. *(Ability stifles a smile).* In the letter, they cited my accounts in Mbengue, my cars, my houses, my hotels, and all my possessions as testimonies of suspected embezzlement. After charging me with high

level embezzlement, the letter requested the Supreme Audit Commission to carry out investigations. (*Unnoticed, Ability shades his eyes with horizontally window-like fingers and smiles*).

Shufai Nsaw: Go and talk with the Big Man. Oil his lips. Honourable, take your place on the ladder. Now that Honourable is here, we may proceed.

Ability: (*Stands and cups his hands*). Mmmm. Must issues concerning land be discussed in the presence of *Come no Gos*?

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*. I don't think you have more rights in this marriage than I do.

Ability: (*Pointing a finger up*). Mr. Wirkitum...

Shufai Nsaw: (*Cuts in*). Ability, how dare you refer to a title holder of no mean standing as a Mr?

Tav Banboye: *Orrrrrrrrrr!*

Ability: My mouth is too cultured to call a nobody by an arrogated title. (*Cups his hands*). Mmmm!

Hon S Wirkitum: Where did I go wrong that everywhere I'm targeted as a subject for either discussion or ridicule?

Tarhnteh: Honourable Shey, that claim is not made by the hierarchy of the traditional ladder. (*Shufai Nsaw and Shufai Sarbam nod*).

Ability: Is it an insult recognizing his status as a new breed of hybrids?

Tarhnteh: (*Laughing*). Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ability will never change.

Hon S Wirkitum: (*Lifts up and wiggles the forefinger of his left hand as he speaks*). *Ebilidy*. A lot of damage has been caused already. Limit your excesses.

Tav Banboye: Correct.

Shey Ghamogha: Honourable, bring down that finger. We are matured.

Hon S Wirkitum: You can't use mature means to fight an immature person.

Ability: (*Limps off and leans diagonally on his staff*). Insiders and Outsiders rub shoulders but they're not from the same source.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*. This is administration. Learn to keep administration and tribal sentiments apart.

Ability: I do not know of any administration where half-bloods have the right to administer. (*Shy Ghamogha nods again*).

Hon S Wirkitum: Your manners suit my understanding of madness.

Ability: Bastard! If I decide to reduce you to a stiff shadow, nobody will cough.

Hon S Wirkitum: Tragedy targets achievements and not failures.

Ability: (*Drops his staff and begins to roll up his sleeves as he speaks*). If that is the way you plan to depart from this world, I don't quarrel with people's choices.

Tav Banboye: Thank you.

Hon S Wirkitum: *Ebilidy*, some people are bad but not dangerous. You are bad and dangerous.

Ability: One of us will sleep in the mortuary today.

Tav Banboye: Correct.

Tarhnteh: Stop it please. Ability, this is not what brought us here.

Ability: Tarhnteh. Do you want to buy this case?

Tarhnteh: (*Shouting*). Ability, this is a family. This family is us. You cannot destroy a family. You cannot destroy everybody around you. You cannot destroy the environment where you live. It's going to affect you. If anything happens to anybody, we're all affected.

Ability: When Ability is insulted, it is normal. When he reacts, it is the whole family that is affected.

Shufai Nsaw: *(Clenches his staff in the air and Ability sits down).*
Elders of *Kibaaka*, a bat that hovers about in the day light has a message. Shey Ghamogha. Ability. Tell the Council of Elders why you brought us here. Shey Ghamogha, we will hear from you first.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Stands and cups his hands).* Mmrr! People of *Kibaaka* ; I greet you.

Elders: *Fey!*

Shey Ghamogha: My wife has bought land in her name.

Shufai Nsaw: What? When? How? From who?

Shufai Sarbam: *(Stands and starts to stagger across the floor).*

Tarhnteh: They should sit down. *Mmrrhrr.* We are sorry. They should sit down.

Shufai Sarbam: *(Returns to his seat).* Who sold land to a woman?

Shey Ghamogha: We do not yet know. *Mmmmm.* Elders of *Kibaaka*, Mother of children dragged naked women and the *Come no Gos* to the heart of the land.

Elders: *Hei!*

Shey Ghamogha: MANDJARA has chosen to dance to the beat of the drums whose drummers are Command and the Head Quarters.

Elders: *Kwifon.*

Shey Ghamogha: *Mmrrhrr. (Shey sits down).*

Shufai Nsaw: Mother of children may come forward.
(Shey's wife steps out and bends the upper half of her body forward).

Shufai Nsaw: Woman, whose daughter are you? Do you want to become a man?

Mrs Ghamogha: *(In a stooping position).* Our fathers; Government has untied the rope with which the woman was roped and tethered. *(The elders shrug).*

Shufai Nsaw: Woman, are you really aware that you are a woman?

- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, forgive me if may I sound disrespectful. The truth must however be spoken. I was not born a woman. I became a woman. (*The elders shrug and scream*).
- Shufai Sarbam:** Abomination!
- Mrs Ghamogha:** My husbands, is the woman not conceived and constructed by custom? Our fathers. Words created the woman and carved out boundaries. I live my life on stage because words became creators and stage directors. I am tired of living on stage. I want to walk out and end it all. I want to leave no traces of stage life.
- Elders:** *Hei!*
- Shufau Nsaw:** (*Shakes his head*). Who sold land to a woman?
- Shey Ghamogha:** *Mmmmm*. I stumbled on the Land Certificate.
- Shufai Nsaw:** Does it bear the name of the person who sold land to our wife?
- Shey Ghamogha:** *Kaab*. The Sale Certificate is the only paper that can provide that information.
- Shufai Nsaw:** Woman. The Council of Elders demands to see the Sale Certificate.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, the Sale Certificate belongs to MANDJARA. I bought the piece of land in question for a project which will benefit everybody in the community. One NGO has accepted to give us financial assistance on condition that we have enough land for our project.
- Shufai Sarbam:** Woman, do you want to change the ways of our land?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, tradition itself is not bad. It is the approach that is bad. It is the methods of doing things that should be revised.
- Shufai Sarbam:** Woman, why did you drag women and the

Come no Go to the palace?

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers. We went to the palace to plead that society should try to regulate where there are excesses; irrespective of whoever is promoting the excesses. *(The elders shrug).*

Shufai Nsaw: Ability, tell *Kibaaka* why you dragged Mother of children before the Fathers of fathers.

Ability: *(Stands). Mrs Ghamogha turns her head swiftly and gapes at Ability).* Mother of children, where is my wife?

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa* Ability, I don't know.

Ability: *(Rants).* MAMDJARA tore my marriage to shreds and you claim you don't know the whereabouts of my wife?

Mrs Ghamogha: We counsel people who come to us for direction. We listen to them and suggest solutions. We only want to build marriages and families...

Ability: *(Rants).* MANDJARA is the reason why nobody calls me father or husband. You succeeded to gash a hole in my marriage and claim you're building homes and marriages?

Tarhnteh: Ability, it's ok.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa* Ability, I've been talking to women about the dangers of sharing their husbands with other women. I tell women that polygamy is a killer disease. I tell those who come to us for guidance and counselling that polygamy is part of the AIDS production and distribution network. The pathetic situation in this community pushed me to serve. Yet, I've never encouraged divorce or separation.

Ability: Biiywong herself declared that you rescued her from the fangs of AIDS.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa Ability,* on many occasions Biiywong came

to me for counselling. She often complained that you were sharing your love with other women. She never stopped complaining about your excessive drinking habits. She needed advice.

Ability: And you instructed her to run away from the AIDS and diseases network you planted in my manhood? Isn't it?

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa* Ability, a woman who accepts to share her husband with other women signs a contract to become a shareholder in the production and distribution of AIDS and diseases. My fathers; we need to draw a line between advice and influence.

Shufai Nsaw: Do you think your advice solved a problem, or created one?

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, if one of the partners in a polygamous marriage is infected, the others cannot avoid being affected. That is what I told Biiy Wong. We speak to men through their wives. I've been talking to everybody about unsafe and harmful habits. We only educate people on the dangers and diseases one is likely to inherit when one has more than one partner. Our fathers; we teach the right thing by exposing the consequences of bad habits.

Tav Banboye: Correct!

Ability: Mother of Children. Are you really aware that you are inciting women to abandon their children and husbands with the pretext that polygamous homes lodge diseases and dangers?

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, certain customs are crimes.

Elders: *Hei!*

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, when a single home has many

wives, its problems multiply. A man who marries more than one wife is likely to transform his manhood into a factory that manufactures and distributes diseases to potential customers.

Shufai Nsaw:

Kwifon!

Mrs Ghamogha:

People of *Kibaaka* land, a woman who accepts to share her partner with another will eventually find herself in the wagon of pilgrims on an irreversible journey to the grave.

Shufai Nsaw:

Kwifon!

Ability:

(Stands). Produce my wife...

Tav Banboye:

Now.

Elders:

You have no choice.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers; this is what happened. *(Closes her eyes slowly)*.

Enter Mrs Ghamogha and Women

Mrs Ghamogha:

The meeting of today will be brief because of the on-going door to door and field work activities we are carrying out. We will start with tasks and responsibilities. For those who will be going to the field, be observant; participate and observe; ask questions; engage participants on discussions; listen carefully; take notes on sheets of papers. Consider, Age, Sex, Profession, Possessions, Marital status, Type of marriage, Number of boys/girls in each family, proportion of boys and girls receiving education; challenges, perceptions and attitudes on inheritance; surviving or coping strategies, self-building measures. We will meet on Sunday at 1 Pm after church service. Bring all the statistics and facts from

the field. Team leaders, you know what to do.
(*They walk out*).

Enter Mrs Ghamogha and Biiywong

(*Mrs Ghamogha is holding a tape recorder and a camera, while Biiywong holds a note book and a pen. There is a knock at the door.*)

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Knocking*). Is anybody in?

Lukong: (*A faint voice*). C-c-come right inside. Who am I s-s- speaking to?

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Brings a tape recorder closer to Lukong's mouth and turns it on while Biiywong takes down notes*). Baa. I am Mrs Ghamogha. Biiywong is here with me. The women's group sent us to give you food. (*Places a basket on the floor. Lukong feels the basket with his fingers*).

Lukong: Our wives. Y-you will *shee* the ch-children of your children.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Feyi baa*. Baa, how would you wish to be remembered by your male and female children when you are no more?

Lukong: M-my wives gave me only she-goats. My name will die when I join my fathers.

Mrs Ghamogha: Baa, we learned you want to sell your land. We are ready to buy it.

Lukong: *Ngiri!* Woman! Who is your father? (*Shakes his head*). Leave my house now! Take your food away. (*As he reaches his hand for his staff, the women storm out of the house*).

Mrs Ghamogha: Is anybody in?

Taata: Have you missed your way?

Mrs Ghamogha: We came to greet you. Baa, we will like to find out how you are feeling today. (*Holds out the tape recorder and points the camera at Taata*).

Taata: As my wives have not killed me, I will see another harvest season.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa*, how many wives do you have?

Taata: Jaika, Bulami and small *titi*.

Mrs Ghamogha: Are they happy living together?

Taata: How can they be happy when they quarrel and fight every day?

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa*, who do you think is responsible for the conflict in your home?

Taata: Who else apart from Jaika.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa*, can you tell us how the fighting has affected life in your family? And, what do you think should be done which you are not doing to have peace in your home?

Taata: Do they themselves want peace?

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa*, I would like to find out how you feel about having a large family?

Taata: *Ha, ha, ha, ha*. I gave my daughter to Taadom Kimfoi. With a wag of his left finger, thunder can visit all my enemies.

Mrs Ghamogha: Thank you. We will be on our way now.

Taata: Go well, my daughters.

At the threshold

Mrs Ghamogha: We greet you *Baa*. We will like to share with you.

First Man: (*Smiling*). Is it money?

Mrs Ghamogha: We want to discuss family issues. *Baa*. How many wives do you have?

First Man: I had four. One ran away.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa*, how does marrying many wives meet your expectations? I mean to say...why did you marry many wives?

First Man: Is there a day my bowls are not swelling with *Njamanjama* and lumps of *fufu*? Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Mrs Ghamogha: *Baa*. Amongst your wives and children, is there a certain behaviour that you find

especially unacceptable?

First Man:

Hei! Their problems can fill a basket.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Baa; we will like to know if all your children go to school.

First Man:

Is there anybody in *Kibaaka* who does not know that a man who does not know book trains his shoulders to carry cargo?

Mrs Ghamogha:

Baa; as head of the family, how do you raise the money required to take care of your family?

First Man:

I am a man! I have goats and fowls. I sell some when I need money.

Mrs Ghamogha:

What kind of support do you get from your wives?

First Man:

Shamla is hard working. I sold coffee and the bags of potatoes and groundnuts she harvested from her farms. That is how I raised money to buy my goats. Beri and Yula came and met these things.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Baa, how many of your female children go to school?

First Man:

If I send a girl to the classroom, who will help her mother in the farm?

Enter First Woman

Mrs Ghamogha:

Mami, we greet you.

First Woman:

May your days know no darkness.

Mrs Ghamogha:

We will like to discuss with you. *Mami*. How many children do you have?

First Woman:

Is there anybody in *Kibaaka* who does not know that Betonla Wiingoran is determined not to hear the cry of a baby under my roof? (*Shrugs*). If Tantan had not heard my cry, I will not even be talking about (*counting her fingers*) Fonlon, Shemlon, Dzekem, Verdzekov,

Burinyuy, Beri, Ayuni, Afoni, Wirngoran and Vidzem.

Mrs Ghamogha: *Mami*, what kind of help do you get from your husband to be able to support such a large family?

First Women: Help? *Hei! (Pauses).*

Mrs Ghamogha: Have you discussed the things you do not like with the father of your children?

First Woman: *(Bends, surveys the surrounding with her eyes and speaks).* My daughter, where will I see him? Listen, for three harvest seasons, if it is not the turn of Betonla Wiingoran, it is the turn of Rufina. *(Sighs).*

(They separate).

Biiywong: My husband dishes his love around. He is seeing one woman. "I am a man". That is what he tells me. There's nothing I can do about it. I learnt he is making arrangements to marry her.

Mrs Ghamogha: Biiywong, polygamy is a disease. Kill it before it stings and kills you. Your home has no place for intruders and diseases. Talk with your husband. Tell him that you love him but not diseases. You can even bring him for counselling.

Biiywong: *(Hesitating).* I am-I- I am only a woman. I don't have the power to stop my husband from marrying another wife.

Mrs Ghamogha: Talk to your husband through somebody he listens to.

Biiywong: They will hate me. They will call me names.

Mrs Ghamogha: Biiywong, anybody who accepts to share his or her partner with others signs a contractual agreement with AIDS, diseases and death. I've taught you how to live a long and healthy life.

Go now and write an examination that will either fetch you 100% or 0%.

Biiwong:

Thank you. I know what to do now.

Mrs Ghamogha:

(As if recovering from a trance, she opens her eyes slowly and speaks). Our fathers; this is what happened.

Ability:

Woman, do you realize you just confessed to rooting off Biywong from marriage? Truly, household heads must be careful each time they smell your presence around the vicinity of their homes. Your agenda is dangerous.

Tav Banboye:

Correct.

Shufai Sarbam:

Woman, are women complaining that they do not like polygamy?

Elders:

(In chorus). Ohrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers, women in polygamous marriages are not there because they like it. Putting aside the repercussions, can our husbands cope with the swelling number of children and grandchildren in their polygamous hives? Our fathers, remember that children have a right to food, clothing and shelter; a right to education; a right to medical care; and a right to be happy. Can our polygamous husbands provide all these to the village of children that pop out of their loins every day?

Shufai Nsaw:

This is an insult?

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers; have we ever experienced what it means to live the whole of one's life thinking, regretting, disagreeing, quarrelling, fighting and competing with other children and women?

Shufai Nsaw:

Woman, I will seriously advice you to watch your tongue or we will seal it for you. Woman, where do you think you are? Are we

complaining that having many wives and children is a load to us?

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers; permit me to answer your question with a question.

Shufai Nsaw: Did you come here to answer or to ask questions? Who is who in this court? Woman! Speak if you have something to say in your defence.

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, when we give birth to files of children, home training becomes ineffective. And what are the consequences on society at large when we fail to give our children proper training? We push them into professions and to places they never bargained for. Beer parlours open their doors to them. Child-traffickers open their nets to them. Diseases open their laps to them. Streets and abandoned vehicles provide accommodation for them. Our fathers, is there any polygamist who can deny his fair share of guilt in their crimes?

Shufai Sarbam: *Ngiri!*

Shey Ghamogha: Did Shufai Nsaw ask you to watch your tongue?

Ability: I hope this court is taking note of the torrent of insults that this woman has been lavishing on this honourable panel of judges. Woman, are you aware you are insulting the generous efforts of polygamists who throughout these years have strongly assisted Government in reducing female unemployment?

Tav Banboye: *(To Mrs Ghamogha).* Answer!

Ability: Woman! Who else apart from the polygamists you now insult have brought domestic unemployment to the low level at which it

now stands?

Elders:

Orrrbhrrrrrrrr!

Ability:

Woman! Who stands to benefit when a man marries ten or more wives? Who is employed when a man marries many wives? Who guards who in that marriage? Who shields who in it? Who owns the family? And who is the tenant that has free accommodation? Who employs who in a polygamous marriage? Tell *Kibaaka*! Devilish woman, where did polygamists go wrong in assisting the Head Quarters towards alleviating unemployment and poverty? Is this the reward that polygamists receive for lifting off our young women from the streets?

Shey Ghamogha:

She thought those she will meet here are like Shey Ghamogha (*turns to his wife*). Woman, you have met your match.

Shufai Sarbam:

Woman, there are more women than men in *Kibaaka*. If polygamy is abolished, what, in your opinion would happen to the extra women who are not yet married and to those wives who would be trimmed off? (*The elders nod*).

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers, the training MANDJARA provides is one that can help any woman to survive in any condition...

Shufai Sarbam:

(*Cutting in*). Mother of children, let me give you the occasion to insult us further. Now that MANDJARA has passed a ruling that binds a man to only one woman, what advice would you give to our Fon, Shufai Nsaw, Nyuydze, Nkferkibu and us? Should we dismiss some of our wives from our homes because polygamy kills? (*The elders nod*).

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers, you've asked so many questions.

Permit me to answer them. Think of the children who cannot share a meal with their father because it is not their mother's cooking week. Think of the women who not only live their lives fighting and quarrelling every day, but are tortured, frustrated and lonely because the time table says it is another woman's turn. Our fathers, make an effort and visit neighbourhoods in *Kibaaka*. MANDJARA has done that. Compound yards look like graveyards. The victims are mostly young girls. Compounds are also becoming maternities. It's pathetic. You're still two hundred meters away when you hear faint cries of babies. At times you think that you are approaching a market at midday. As you approach the compound itself, you live the real experience. Hardly would you avoid covering your nostrils with one edge of your loin cloth because your presence is announced by crowds of flies hovering, feasting or taking off from little mountains of excreta littered everywhere (*shakes her head*). Children with extended stomachs that look like vanished wood whose interiors have been conquered by settlements of germs stagger about trailed by dogs. Some end up in places where their organs and breasts are auctioned to potential dealers for ritual purposes. Our fathers, the mothers are mostly uneducated girls. Our fathers, if we do not teach what is right by exposing what is wrong, are we going to avoid extending compound yards into graveyards?

Shey Wirkitum:

Congratulations Mrs Ghamogha (*turn to the elders*). Folks, didn't I tell you it was important

to give the women a chance to tell us exactly what they are doing? (*Ability cocks his head and swallows hard*).

Shufai Nsaw:

Woman, you are daring *Mwerong*! (*the elders nod*).

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers, the women's group deserves to be appreciated for doing what *Mwerong* has either ignored or refused to do (*Shufai Nsaw and Shufai Sarbam simultaneously bury their heads in their hands*).

Shufai Nsaw:

That group must be banned!

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers, the training MANDJARA provides is one that helps all categories of people to become useful to society and themselves. We teach cookery lessons. We teach the jobless and particularly school dropouts how to produce and sell palm oil, akra, yoghurt, kwacoco, puff-puff and egusi-pudding. During meeting sessions, we do cookery demonstrations and table dressing. We teach people how to treat body odour. We teach women how to prepare good juice for children with insufficient blood. We teach people how to use juice from lemon as cure for whitlow. We teach them the cure for malarial attacks. We teach the jobless how to make soap from kernel oil and wood ash. We teach people how to manage conflict in their homes. Our fathers; I believe that a lot can be done if we are informed.

Tav Banboye:

Good answer. (*Ability looks at Tav Banboye and shakes his head*).

Shey Wirkitum:

Hie folks. We've heard from Mrs Ghamogha. The activities they're carrying out reflect the needs of *Kibaaka* and their target beneficiaries are *Kibaakans*. I believe there's a lot to take

from MANDJARA.

Mrs Ghamogha: Thank you Honourable for appreciating what the women are doing. Each time these ideas are expressed, they are countered with violence from our husbands (*Indicating a bandage on her forehead*). Our fathers, this is just one sign of that violence. My husband did it.

Shufai Sarbam: When did it happen?

Mrs Ghamogha: On the afternoon of Nseeri.

Shufai Sarbam: ‘Nseeri’-Nseeri! Mbarang! Mother of children, has Nseeri become a ‘country Sunday? Errhrrr? What was your intention loitering around Shey’s loins on a Nseeri afternoon when your mates were tilling and preparing farmlands for planting? (*Shey Ghamogha nods*).

Elders: Orrhrrrrrrrrrrrooo!

Shufai Nsaw: What abomination did you commit this time around? (*The elders nod*).

Mrs. Ghamogha: I refused to give Shey the Sale Certificate. I told him I don’t like the idea of sharing my land with another woman.

Shufai Nsaw: Who is the other woman you are talking about? To the best of our knowledge, Shey still has one wife.

Mrs. Ghamogha: Shey is planning to marry Agnes.

Shufai Nsaw: Shey, is this the way you have chosen to inform your kinsmen of your second marriage?

Shey Ghamogha: The thought has never crossed my mind. Mmmmm.

Mrs. Ghamogha: Mami Biy Wiiba caught them in their plan and informed me.

Shufai Nsaw: If Biy Wiiba is in this court, let her come forward.

Biy Wiiba: (*Stands, bends forward and sticks out her chest*).

Mmmmmmm. It is true. I saw them! Hmm. Who in this village does not know that they drink mimbo together every day? (Smacks her hips). Who even knows why they mentioned the land Maayuh bought with her money?

Tarhnteh:

Mami Biy Wiiba; do you have any idea how that information might have affected mother of children and her marriage?

Shufai Nsaw:

Biy Wiiba, you will pay a heavy fine for tearing hearts and homes in this village. On the next country Sunday, we expect to receive you in the palace before sunset. On coming, bring with you a he-goat, a white cock, a basket full of fufu and njamanjama, and two jugs of palm wine.

Biy Wiiba:

Hei! (Biy Wiiba spreads out her arms in shock).

Shufai Nsaw:

Remember to prepare the njamanjama with dry fish and dry meat. That will teach you to stop intruding into issues that do not concern you. You may sit down.

Shufai Sarbam:

Has Shufai Nsaw spoken our minds?

Elders:

Feyia! Mmmmmmm.

Shufai Nsaw:

People of Kibaaka land. Let us return to our main concern here. Mother of children has bought land in her name. That's what brought us here. What do we do?

(Shufai Sarbam tilts his head towards Shufai Nsaw and both men whisper to each other. Thereafter, they both beckon the other Elders who then move up to them. They all concert for a few minutes and return to their respective seats).

Shufai Nsaw:

Shey Ghamogha, come forward. (Gives Shey Ghamogha FCF425.) Take this, give it to Mother of children. (Shey Ghamogha stretches his hand but hers remain intact). Mother of children, take it. Shey has returned the money you paid

for the land. What that means is that Shey Ghamogha is the owner of that land.

Mrs. Ghamogha:

Our fathers, I can't accept the money.

Shufai Sarbam:

Woman, how did Shey Ghamogha marry you?

Mrs Ghamogha:

Our fathers; I can still remember. Shey and his family visited my late father. As it is the custom that the father gives his daughter out in marriage, my father accepted them. He asked them to settle my mother's hospital bills as part of my bride price. During their second visit, my father had died. Shey was accompanied by two other men and his father. They came along with gifts of raffia wine, palm oil and cam wood. My uncle sent for me and I joined them in the family hall. Shey was presented to me as my husband. During their third visit, my uncle told them that he was simply a baby-sitter, but however accepted the gifts they brought. He explained that my parents lost contact with their family due to conflict and war. They were however directed to my mother's birthplace. Given the circumstances surrounding my mother and her place of birth, my uncle accepted the bride price. Raffia wine was poured in a clay pot. My cup was filled. Following instructions, I took a sip and gave the cup to Shey who emptied it. Later that night, I was robbed with palm oil and camwood and presented to Shey and we were declared husband and wife.

Shufai Nsaw:

You have just told the elders that Shey Ghamogha and his family paid a bride price on you. Property does not own property. (*Shey smiles*).

Elders:

Orhrrrrro!

- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers. Are you suggesting that I abandon my land?
- Shufai Sarbam:** Woman, did you even understand what Shufai Nsaw just told you? How can you abandon something you never owned in the first place? Well, if our request that you relinquish your pretentious claims to ownership of the land sounds like a suggestion to you, then let us clearly draw your attention to the fact that it is a decision. (*Shay Ghamogha nods*). Land belongs to the man. The harvest belongs to the woman. *Mwerong* has spoken.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, *Mwerong* is not the law.
- Shufai Nsaw:** *Ngiri!*
- Shufai Sarbam:** Woman, do you realize you've just insulted *Mwerong*? *Errhrr?* (*Shakes his head*). Woman, confess now!
- Elders:** *Feyi!*
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, who is the real culprit? (*The elders drone in shock*). When a thief is protected, the most innocent becomes the guiltiest.
- Elders:** *Hei!*
- Shufai Nsaw:** We will pretend we never heard the insults on *Mwerong* if you bow to *Mwerong* now and relinquish all claims to that land.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, I can't give up my land.
- Shufai Nsaw:** (*Peers at the Elders in turn and beckons a guard*). Guard!
- Guard:** *Mmmmm.*
- Shufai Nsaw:** Go and take a mirror from Ayuni and bring to us. (*The guard rushes out and returns with a mirror. Shufai Nsaw puts it on the ground*). Woman, take it. (*She bends forward and takes the mirror*). Look in the mirror and tell *Kibaaka* whether you saw a man or a woman.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers, I do not know whether I should

look with my eyes or with my mind. However, when I use my eyes, I see a woman. When I use my mind, I see something beyond a woman.

Shufai Nsaw: (*Shakes his head*). Woman! Look in the mirror and tell the elders of *Kibaaka* whether you saw a man or a woman. We insist.

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, if my answer is guided only by what the eyes can see, it would imply that where the eyes cannot reach does not exist. (*The elders shrug their shoulders and look at each other in turns*).

Shufai Nsaw: Woman. Look at your chin and chest. Tell the elders of *Kibaaka* whether you saw breasts or beards. (*The Elders nod*).

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, words created me and section me up. A woman was created by words. A woman is the invention of words. Words constructed the woman and gave her worlds and roles. I call myself the brainchild of words. Words pitched me on stage to yield to the rhythm of drumbeat. Words gave me a name, a shape and a form. I became a woman only when I was conceived in words and constructed in words. I became a woman the day words became the creator. I live in the world of words where I'm nothing but an adopted child. Our fathers, take me out of words and discover that I am other things words refused to acknowledge. Our fathers, look beyond my linguistic ancestry. You will find in me another life and name. (*The elders shake their heads while Taa Gheb spews spit in the air*).

Shufai Nsaw: Ability. Come forward. Pick up that drum and play the *Manjong* rhythm. The elders should

dance.

Ability:

(Ties the rope fastened to the drum round his waist and begins to beat the drum, as he hums. The elders filed across the floor, singing the chorus and playing corresponding instruments. As they clap their hands and machets in the air against each other, they move their bodies, arms and feet unanimously to manjong rhythm. In unison, they start to twist their bodies, making slantways and well calculated parallel movements. As if to harness their movements and rhythm, they move their legs to and fro to the rhythm of their song while nodding simultaneously).

Ooh-hrroo-ho-hrroo-hrroo!

Hrroo-hrrooo (2x)

Ooh-hrroo-ho-hrroo-hrroo!

Hrroo-hrrooo! (2x)

Shufai Nsaw:

Stop and sit down! Woman. Can you tell the elders of *Kibaaka* why everybody danced in harmony to *Manjong* rhythm?

Mrs Ghamogha:

I don't know whether what I've just watched is performance or life. My fathers, could the composer have asked for another tone? Could the drummer have played another rhythm? Haven't I been made to live my life on stage and be watched and nodded at, or frown at, by my creators in the same way the drummer watched his dancers dance to his *Manjong* rhythm? Our fathers, how can I live my entire life performing simply because I became an actress? Is everybody not masking? Are we really who we are when the mask is on? Is life just a mere performance? Can the actor step out of the programmed role? Can the actor disobey the stage director? Isn't it obvious that the cultural composer chooses and programs

the rhythm and we simply dance to the rhythmic pattern? Isn't it obvious that the dancer must yield to the rhythm of the composer's music? Is a woman's life then not just a performance of the composer's music? (*The elders scream*).

Ability: Woman, if you were to dance with the elders, would you change the style of dancing, or, dance to *Manjong* rhythm?

Mrs Ghamogha: Our fathers, can a woman beat her own drum and sing her own song? Can she dance to the rhythm of her own song? (*The elders scream*).

Shufai Nsaw: This music can only continue on our rhythm.

Elders: *Mmmmm!*

Shufai Nsaw: Suggestions now!

Ability: All the *Come no Go* must go.

Elders: *Feyi!*

Hon S Wirkitum: Marriage has bridged the gap *Abilidy* is determined to widen.

Ability: What do you understand by marriage? When a *Come no Go* is hard pressed, he simply offloads into any available gutter. Men borrow wives. Women borrow husbands. Somebody has got to pay the price. Half-bloods and products of footpath affairs call nobody father. Honourable Shey Wirkitum, common knowledge should teach some of us that *Kibaaka* is unavoidably in danger of blood-pollution if the *Come no Go* continues to litter the land with half-bloods. (*Laughter erupting*). I cannot even remember the last time we took a bride price on any of our daughters. (*Mimics*) "Their origin is not known. No bride price was paid on her mother. She is a *Come no Go*". This is the garbage that springs out from the

lips of those who pose as in-laws. People of *Kibaaka*. Do you call that robbery or marriage? This is not a personal matter. I'm only fighting against blood-pollution.

Hon S Wirkitum:

(Shouting). Abilidy, it's enough.

Ability:

What's enough? The fact that *Kibaaka* is being polluted by products of cross-fertilization, or the fact that I am reacting?

Hon S Wirkitum:

Abilidy, you're taking it too far.

Ability:

(Ranting). Am I wrong in staging a strong campaign to eradicate blood-pollution in *Kibaaka*? *(As Honourable frowns, others roar with laughter)*. New breeds of hybrids must go! In the absence of that, all *Come no Gos* must pay New Man Tax. Titled *Come no Gos* must also renew their stay and titles every year in a traditional ceremony.

Elders:

Feyi!

Shufai Nsaw:

We do not cut down a tree from which branches sprout.

Ability:

If we continue to encourage marriage with half-bloods, we will not be surprised if tomorrow, *Kibaaka* ceases to be *Kibaaka* and becomes in the eyes of outsiders a breeding ground for hybrids and embedded breeds. *(Some elders nod, while Honourable gapes open mouthed)*.

Ability:

Mr Wirkitum...

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy, if you ever address me again as a hybrid or Mr. Wirkitum, I'll come down to your level. Mad man.

Ability:

Wirkitum, is that a new way of appreciating title worshippers? I call you Mr. Wirkitum and what I earn in return is a humiliating insult? *(Spreads out his hands)*. How did I offend you?

Was it a dishonour addressing you before these right thinking elders as Mr. Wirkitum? Erhrr? Did I mention the fact that women and children are beginning to mistake your title for signs of origin? Does that kind of message reside within the obscurity of my humble lips? Did I even mention the fact that your honourable title was acquired from title retailers through a fattening compromise involving goats and thousands of CFA?

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy, you'll pay for this!

Ability:

Honourable, where and when did my lips ever fail to acknowledge the product of trade by barter that you now charge me with madness right before the ladder of command? (*The elders roar with laughter while Ability continues to rant*). Harmful insect! Did I even unveil the fact that the trajectory and mutation of your origin make these smart elders feel unprotected from the harmful effects of blood-pollution? Mr. Moutapon Mfemshive Wirkitum. (*Leans his head on his left shoulder and spreads out his hands again*). Have I ever attempted to disclose the fact that lack of unanimity in existing results on your blood group makes people happy to miss you when you're not around? (*The elders roar with laughter while Ability frowns*).

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilidy! Stop it now!

Ability:

(*Pointing a finger at Shey Wirkitum*). This violent and unwarranted eruption of emotions cannot extend your stay in *Kibaaka*. It is true that titles have clothed hybrids and polluted species of crossbreeds in *Kibaaka* customary rights. It is also true that Wirkitum has lived and postured in *Kibaaka* traditional robes for so long that

children and women are beginning to forget his true origin. Listen now! Mr. Borrowed feathers! Although your title and long sojourn in *Kibaaka* might have given you customary rights, they have neither given you birth rights nor blood rights.

Shufai Nsaw:

Ability! That's not what brought us here!

Ability:

A half-blood is forever a half-blood.

Hon S Wirkitum:

Ebilibdy! Did I warn you never to refer to me again as half-blood?

Ability:

Which elder will deny that you are clad and decked in borrowed feathers? Tell me. Which elder does not know that although a crocodile lives in the water, it is not a fish? Mr. Half-blood, which elder does not know that a snake can shed off its skin but will still remain a snake even in thoroughly embellished garments? Tell me! Who amongst these right thinking silent elders will deny that although the butterfly can shed off its cocoon; scramble into new garments, soar and hover in the air like a bird, its true origin is still *(moves his stretched hands sideways and forwards in a wave-like manner)* the creeping caterpillar? *(Pauses, frowns and scrutinizes faces apparently unaffected by the uproar of laughter that spills over from the elders, and continues)*. Who amongst these elders does not know that on the other side of the river, strangers negotiate their stay even on sheets of papers?

Tarhnteh:

Ability! It's enough!

Ability:

I am not advocating for the extinction of combinations and hybrid forms! God forbid! How can I? Fellow elders, we can't fold our arms and watch endangered species of hybrids

wither away when their very existence is an illustration of God's sense of variety in his creation. (*Laughter continues as he turns to address Shey Wirkitum*). Mr. rented feathers and all other pollinated products, the point I am making is that all the doors are not closed. So, the problem of birth rights can still be negotiated. Mr. hired feathers, obtaining a Resident Permit to live in *Kibaaka* is negotiated settlement (*the roar of laughter resumes*). Dear hired feathers roaming *Kibaaka* land, to show the extent of our generosity in the midst of rage, all titled hybrids shall be exempted from the New Man Tax on one condition (*holds his finger straight and pointing up*). That on the last country Sunday of every year, all titled hybrids shall renew their titles in an open ceremony before the entire clan (*the elders spill out laughter*). That way, we shall be able to know those whose stay has been prolonged, and those whose titles are expired and who are therefore shortlisted for eviction (*a roar of laughter streams in the air as he continues*). Any titles renewed contrary to the above specifications shall not be recognized (*laughter continues while Shey Wirkitum leans forward, takes off his red feathered cap, and begins to take off the beads from his neck*).

Shufai Nsaw:

Honourable Shey Wirkitum! Don't do it! Please, don't!

Hon S Wirkitum:

(*Weeping*). Hasn't he stripped me enough? Is there any difference between my head and a naked head? *Erbrrr*? Hasn't he referred to me all through in your presence as Mr. Wirkitum instead of Honourable Shey Wirkitum? Shufai

- Nsaw, haven't I had enough? What difference does it make now? No! When an engagement is broken, one returns the ring (*stretches his hands to give his cap and beads to Tarhnteh, but Tarhnteh conducts his hands behind his back*).
- Shufai Nsaw:** Without the beads and red feathers, you are naked.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** A naked existence is better than the absence of peace. The choice is mine.
- Shufai Sarbam:** Not every choice is the right decision.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** A wrong decision is better than a wrong engagement.
- Shufai Nsaw:** No man turns his back to his people.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** We joined you for the wrong reasons. I'm leaving you for the right reasons. I'd rather be nowhere than be in the wrong marriage.
- Shufai Nsaw:** The gods of the land may put a curse on you.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** I was not born to live forever.
- Ability:** His absence consoles me.
- Shufai Nsaw:** Honourable, we gave your people a wife. They equally gave us a wife. Chance brought your father to *Kibaaka* for a reason. The gods certainly wanted us to dig up and revive the hairy tale. We should be happy that we were fortunate to wake up the old tale. Honourable Shey Wirkitum, you cannot cut the chain even if the tale has grown grey hairs.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** We both made wrong choices.
- Shufai Nsaw:** Bride price exchanged hands.
- Hon S Wirkitum:** We married the wrong partners (*puts his cap and beads on the floor and starts to walk out*).
- Tarhnteh:** Is that how you wish to be remembered?
- Hon S Wirkitum:** We came in through the window. I'm leaving the house through the door. It shall be said I left the house from above. This is victory (*as he*

- walks out, Shufai Nsaw shakes his head in dismay).*
- Ability:** This is the price we must pay for trading titles in *Kibaaka*. We need to celebrate his absence.
- Tav Banboye:** Exactly.
- Shufai Nsaw:** Nooooo! People of *Kibaaka*, we cannot run away from bees when we have honey on our fingers. Honourable Shey Wirkitum is one of us. He has our blood flowing in his veins. He belongs. Forget about his skin colour. The womb of the land that bred his father was the very womb from which our fathers sprang. We must look for Honourable Shey Wirkitum and bring him back (*Ability peeps at Shufai Nsaw scornfully*). Let us not allow ourselves to be derailed any longer. The main issue is that Mother of children has bought land in her name and has refused to surrender it to the head of the family. Woman, I will ask you this question for the last time. Do you choose to surrender the land to Shey Ghamogha or face the stings of *Mwerong*?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Our fathers; the future of *Kibaaka* depends on the different choices we make today. I am very optimistic that the next generation will be thankful to MANDJARA for being the voice of those whose minds and lips have been chained for so long. (*The Elders shake their heads*).
- Shufai Nsaw:** In that case you leave us with no option. People of *Kibaaka*, we are only messengers of Binglo, Chindzev, Gui, Gheh, Kimbo, Mbaame, Vikuu, Vinkar and Killum. (*Pauses and looks at the elders one after the other*). This is a difficult case. This is a difficult moment because Mother of children is a chain between

two worlds. She is a bridge that chains us to our past. She is a peg on which our history hangs its trails and footprints. Yet, she has decided to scorn our ways (*Shufai pauses*). Elders of *Kibaaka*, the messenger cannot change the message. (*he concerts with Shufai Sarbam and continues*). Our wife, we don't have good news for you. (*The guard hits the gong*). This court found you guilty of three counts; you are guilty of insulting our ways; of acting contrary to traditional laws regarding land ownership; and of creating Associations that destroy homes and break up families. This court therefore recommends as follows: from today, the contested land belongs to Shey Ghamogha. Your so-called MANDJARA group is hereby disbanded. You must desist from organizing any public manifestations or promoting any group whose aims and objectives go contrary to the tradition and customs of *Kibaaka*. Finally, as atonement for the pain and disorder you've caused in *Kibaaka*, on the 4th market day, you will bring the following items: one hundred loaves of fufu corn, two pots of njamanjama, three big calabashes of raffia wine, three big calabashes of corn beer, a basket of kola nuts and two goats. *Mwerong* has spoken.

Elders/Guards: The voice of *Mwerong* is the voice of the land.

(Manjong rhythm is being tuned. The Elders hit the back of their hands and matchets in the air as they filed out through the floor. Ability peeps across the room. His eyes meet Shey's eyes. He winks, cups his right fingers leaving an opening at the top, and brings the hand to his mouth and turns it upside down as if to pour the contents into his mouth. Shey nods. As the music leads the Elders

out of the cultural lodge, Mrs Gbamogha and the villagers follow).

Scene II

At a Bush Path

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Musing*). Are they not simply cultural messengers who use tradition to their advantage? Was any of my sex among them? Is a woman's life not just a stage where she performs programmed roles prescribed by traditional tyrants? Wouldn't it ease the burden if only a strand of the woman's voice is lodged in the same chamber that says trespassers will be persecuted? Why is tradition exceedingly hostile to change? Are the centre and the margin not merely carved out by cultural carvers? Isn't it apparent that to privilege one and include is to isolate the other and exclude? Can the law bridge the gap and blur the boundaries language connived with fetters of tradition to carve up? (*Sits on a stone*). Isn't it obvious that a woman is a cultural carving, culturally designed and culturally assigned? Isn't it apparent that for the cultural designer to erect his image and presence, he must create female deficiencies and absence? (*Pauses and continues*). Don't I have the right to belong? Don't I have the right to participate and support any group I believe can bring development to my people? (*Stands*). Why should tradition decree that a woman cannot own land? Even if *Mwerong* is responsible for distributing rights; by what criteria are the rights distributed? (*Shakes her head*). Is the right of *Mwerong* the right to dish out justice on the basis of sex? They refused to recognise my group, not because of what we

do, but because of who we are. Why should a woman be punished for dreaming while a man is rewarded for forgetting? Am I not the unfortunate victim in a union that perceives being a female as a crime punishable by a chain on the mind and a lock on the lips? Is tradition not becoming an enemy of progress? *(Takes a deep breath)*. I must seek legal redress. *(Ability approaches unnoticed and stops)*.

Ability: *(Muses.)* Semi Final Match. No goals. No victory. *(Coughs)*.

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Shudders as she turns and sees Ability)*. What are you doing here?

Ability: I'm always the subject of quite a good number of misunderstandings.

Mrs Ghamogha: What have you contrived this time around?

Ability: What I criticized was your methods and not your intentions. By the way; I did what I did for your sake.

Mrs Ghamogha: Your absence is highly appreciated.

Ability: I can explain-

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Cuts in)*. Just go away!

Ability: Remember we had a game plan.

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Pauses and lifts up her head)*.

Ability: Forget about the drama that took place in the Traditional Court. What I did was part of the game plan. What you saw was a masquerade. I kept up the masquerade of being against you. I was on stage. I wore the mask to mask traces of what I'm doing for you. Now, try to see me through other levels of the game.

Mrs Ghamogha: Just...just- leave me alone.

Ability: I want to help you. Mother of children, political giants will soon be confronting each other in the political football. A Senatorial

throne can change your story. That's all you need to recover your land.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Do you have posts in your pockets that you dish out with such lavish generosity? Don't you want a job? Are you employed? Do you hate power? Can't you contest the seat yourself? By the way, are there not people in your family who are jobless and need jobs?

Ability:

Mother of children, relax. Women need a political empire. This is the moment to take the right decisions. The President just signed a decree convening elections in the country. The race for the Parliamentary seat is on its heels. The race for the Senatorial throne is on high gear. Climb to the top of the tree and harvest black plumbs. Climb to power and your circle of friends will stretch like River Ngomu. Fancy yourself in the Upper House. Participation. Connections. Networks. Privileges. Gifts. Honours. Freedom. Immunity. Power. Influence. *(Smiles)*. *Kibaaka* has five Senatorial seats. Lamentably, there is no female Senator. A recent Presidential Decree has reserved one out of the five Senatorial positions for women. Now, Mayuuh, tell me. Which *Kibaaka* woman can challenge your rights to that throne? As Senator, you will hover over tradition. The question will no longer be your rights to own land but the quantity of land you want to grab. Come to think of it.

Mrs Ghamogha:

What makes you think I am a suitable contestant?

Ability:

You know very well that the Parliamentarian of *Kibaaka* is in his 10th mandate. Remember

he seized that prestigious position from your husband. Besides; he did nothing for the community during his endless terms of office. He has no campaign materials. You do.

Mrs Ghamogha:

What has politics got to do with my land? And what is that campaign material you think I have?

Ability:

Mother of children, people reap a lot of benefits from juicy thrones. Believe me, political title is absolute power. Once Honourable, or Senator, or Her Excellency is appended to your name, the whole world is at your feet. By the way, have you forgotten that you are the eyes and minds of the women? *(Smiles)*. Have you suddenly forgotten that women have recently been raised to the status of King Makers? Mother of children, there are even more women than men in *Kibaaka*. Besides, the women love you and will throw their weight behind you. That gives you the possibility of securing a resounding victory. Mother of children, the women are the real testing ground for these elections. Just collaborate with me. I am ready to lead your campaign caravan. Once I sit on the steering wheel of your campaign wagon, traffic of convoys will dance behind you.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Really?

Ability:

I am gifted with an astonishing rallying force in campaign initiatives. A doze of my campaign speech will change your story. Besides, my ink stings like a bee. I will nail potential rivals with petitions. The present Parliamentarian will have to justify the project funds he has received for the past ten years.

Of course, there is nothing to show. Besides, the days people used to pile positions are over. We will no longer fold our arms and watch people accumulate titles as if they were Medals and Awards. (*She nods*). Mother of children, everything favours you. If you secure the position of Honourable, or Senator, you will transcend the barriers of female limitation, including cultural barriers. Once you grab the seat, no one will question your authority over that land any longer.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Not even *Mwerong*?

Ability:

Mother of children, Senators are 'fon of fons'. Who is *Mwerong* before a Senator? A *Come no Go* like Wirkitum now ruffles up in traditional regalia simply because he became Honourable and Director of Taxation. That is just one of the miracles power can perform.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Are you sure political power can recover my land?

Ability:

One hundred percent.

Mrs Ghamogha:

Is political power actually superior to the supernatural power tradition wields?

Ability:

You are the only one who doubts that. Mayuuuh. A Parliamentarian or Senator secures unrestricted power even within the traditional context.

Mrs Ghamogha:

(*Pauses and takes a deep breath*). Baa Ability, I will find out from Barrister Johnson if political power is superior to the supernatural traditional power. If the answer is yes, I will not hesitate to join politics. If the answer is no, I will have no choice than seek legal remedy. I want my land. (*Pauses and speaks*). *Errbrrr!* That reminds me. Baa Ability. My

husband is in a relationship with Agnes. He's planning to marry her. He's even planning to build a house for her on my own land. You encouraged the plan.

Ability:

(Places the forefinger of his right hand on his forehead, opens his mouth partially and closes his eyes temporarily as if searching).

Mrs Ghamogha:

That conversation took place in a bar.

Ability:

(Smiling). Mother of children. Why do you think I chose to say what I said where someone would hear and inform you?

Mrs Ghamogha:

(In an apologetic tone). Baa Ability. I was misled by my own assumptions. I'm very sorry. I'm sincerely sorry.

Ability:

It's ok. You did not see Ability. Ability did not see you. Go now. I'll see you in the days ahead. *(As she turns to go away, Ability smiles).* Mental magic. Another goal scored. Another victory recorded. *(Smiles again and wags his body as he walks away).*

Scene III

In a Bar

- Shey Ghamogha:** *(Looking at his watch at short intervals. Ability enters).*
- Shey Ghamogha:** Ability, you are a good hunting dog.
- Ability:** Just put a chain around my neck and send me into the bush.
- Shey Ghamogha:** You defended my case so well.
- Ability:** You have no cause to jubilate. Cavendengue will soon have new tenants. She wants to take legal measures. Be ready to share your space with mountains of faeces and files of flies.
- Shey Ghamogha:** You scare me.
- Ability:** I lured Mother of children into a secret meeting. She wants to either involve Barrister Johnson and the Police or become a Senator or Parliamentarian. That means immunity. Remember the paper she brandished before the elders. She has very strong weapons.
- Shey Ghamogha:** What do I do now?
- Ability:** Simple. We just need to send Officer Lucas to fuel Barrister Johnson's pockets and the story will engender sub-plots.
- Shey Ghamogha:** *(Contemplates briefly and speaks).* I have goats. *(Ability smiles).* I also still have a few bags of dry coffee in the house. We need your boys to take the items to the market-
- Ability:** *(Cuts in.)* Count your problems solved.
- Shey Ghamogha:** Barrister Johnson is difficult. How will you convince her?
- Ability:** That is my secret. I need to look for my boys now. We'll join you soon. I'll be on my way now. *(They nod and separate).*

Scene IV

Shey Ghamogha's Courtyard

(Shey Ghamogha and Ability are giving instructions to Dinka and Mbiame who are crouching under piled bags of coffee on their shoulders and dragging goats along).

- Shey Ghamogha:** Give the coffee and goats to Massa Money. Collect the money and wait for me at *Mami mimbo's* bar. Be careful with my money.
- Ability:** A head must roll if a franc is missing.
- Mbiame:** Patron, have you heard again that we passed somewhere and someone complained that a fowl was missing? (*Dinka nods*).
- Shey Ghamogha:** The only reason I will take the risk is that for almost two months, nobody has complained that something is missing in this village.
- Dinka:** No vex *oh*, I beg, no vex. What about pay for labour? (*Mbiame nods*).
- Ability:** You want to earn money for a job you've not yet done?
- Shey Ghamogha:** Go! I will send Baa Ability to you. (*Mbiame and Dinka stagger away*).
- Ability:** The terms of the deal. Besides the money we are expecting, if you win the case; we are entitled to a part of the land.
- Shey Ghamogha:** Confirmed. Meet me at Mami mimbo for a cup of something.

(Shey follows the small path to the external toilet while Ability turns and starts to walk away unevenly. At a footpath below Shey Ghamogha's compound, Ability hears a voice from a distance and stops. As he perceives the approaching figure of Regular, he skips into the nearby bush where he crouches down, squeezes himself through the leaves and waits until Regular twiddles through the bushy path and storms out of the bush. Unnoticed, Ability stealthily emerges from his hideout, looks around, tiptoes with a limp towards Shey's house, smuggles himself again

into the bush, shrinks behind leaves, rears up his head and follows Regular across the yard with his eyes. Shey, who is just coming out of the toilet perceives Regular advancing, stops, and perches on one corner of the house. Regular approaches her sister who is gazing vacantly into thin air and begins to rant).

- Regular:** Where is Shey Ghamogha?
Mrs Ghamogha: *(Shrugs).* He went to the market. I hope there's no problem.
- Regular:** If death is actually a punishment for wrongdoing, what is Ghamogha still doing here on earth? *(Shey shrugs. She observes the bandage on the sister's face).* You lost the case.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** That's the price my kind must pay.
Regular: Is that the price you want to pay too? *(Mrs Ghamogha is silent).* Well, Maayuh, not every story has a good ending. Divorce is the only drug that can liberate you and your land from the prison call marriage.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Divorce? No. Shey is still my husband.
Regular: At his age, Ghamogha has achieved nothing. He has no land. He has no personal house. Is that what you call husband? Does that failure deserve to be worshipped as husband? Maayuh, is Ghamogha different from a stranger in his own land? *(Shey Ghamogha buries his face in his hands).* Maayuh, you need help.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Regular. The problem between my husband and I does not require any form of intrusion from my family members *(Shey nods).*
- Regular:** If the paper you signed at the Council is what has given Ghamogha total rights over you and your senses, then, get rid of it and keep your land.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** I can't destroy what I'm expected to build.
Regular: I said it! I said it!

Mrs Ghamogha: My sister, marriage is endurance.
Regular: Those who are in marriage should enjoy the union they endure.

Mrs Ghamogha: Regu, my marriage must survive.
Regular: Your marriage does not need to be endured any longer. Its expiry date is now. Maayuh, your marriage is dead and needs a coffin.

Mrs Ghamogha: Regular...
Regular: The only husband I know is freedom. Maayuh. Can't you see that marriage takes a woman hostage? Can't you see that you're twice kidnapped? Maayuh! Release yourself from the clutches of the kidnapper call marriage.

Mrs Ghamogha: Regular, we are a couple. If we do not disagree, we are not humans.
Regular: Are you aware that marriage is your first enemy?

Mrs Ghamogha: I am not complaining.
Regular: Roadside talk says Ghamogha is about bringing home another wife. Maayuh! Is it when Shey Ghamogha's matrimonial hive is swelling with marital hostages like you that the mist in your eyes will clear up?

Mrs Ghamogha: Regular, we still love each other.
Regular: Maayuh, your face was almost butchered. Is that violence or love? Listen to me. I will collect magic powder from *Baa Kimfoi*...

Mrs Ghamogha: *(Cuts in)*. Magic what? Regular...
Regular: *(Cuts in)*. Do you know your rights?
Mrs Ghamogha: The right of a woman is not the right to take wrong decisions.
Regular: And which one is the right decision according to you? Adoring that jobless and homeless land grabber? *(Shey shakes his head)*.
Mrs Ghamogha: We married for better or for worse...

Regular: Does 'for better or for worse' exclude consideration of your own happiness? Was the phrase a way of making subjugation a custom? Maayuh! Does 'for better or for worse' imply a subordination of one's right to another?

Mrs Ghamogha: Regular. You don't have better answers either.

Regular: I refused to be under a man because a woman's rank is not evaluated at an approximate price.

Mrs Ghamogha: Submission pays.

Regular: What does it entail to be submissive? Is it subjugation? And what do you actually call yourself? A servant or a partner in marriage?

Mrs Ghamogha: Regu, you need to make a distinction between a servant and a voluntary companion.

Regular: Your husband is a threat to domestic peace.

Mrs Ghamogha: It is the presence of a man in my life that gives me reason to say I am a mother and wife.

Regular: Maayuh! People can be wives without being mothers, and can be mothers without being wives.

Mrs Ghamogha: Did they choose to live that way?

Regular: Are your senses sick and tired like your marriage? Do you even know that it is because of marriage that a woman and land are oceans apart? Maayuh! How would you define marriage? Dialogue or monologue? Comedy or Tragedy? Tell me!

Mrs Ghamogha: Regular. You are not familiar with the matrimonial scene and can't advise.

Regular: I came here to help and not to be insulted.
(*Strides away*).

Scene V
Shey in Deep Introspection

Shey Ghamogha: *(Remembering)*. “At his age, Shey Ghamogha has achieved nothing. He has no land. He has no personal house. Is that what you call husband?” Humiliated as a failure in the presence of my own wife? My own deeds have insulted my authority. If frustration is the price one pays for irresponsibility, I’m definitely at the right stage. I participated in my own destruction. But, how come I made myself my own hell? All my friends are living in their personal homes. I’m not even fit to be raised to the humiliating rank of a tenant. I have failed as a man, a husband and a father *(Pauses)*. In spite of all I’ve done, my wife still loves me. She deserves my apologies *(places the forefinger on his lips)*. Wait, if I offer an apology to my wife, I give up the only thing I am hanging on. Once the land goes, my cap will go. The Regular’s will exist to celebrate my empty existence; my failure, my tragedy *(sticks out his tongue)*. No, I will not lose my red feather. The Sale Certificate must be fished out. The tape recorder must be traced and destroyed.

Enter Mbiame and Dinka

Mbiame: Good news sir. Open eyes quick *oh*.
Shey Ghamogha: *(Turns swiftly)*. What are you doing here? I hope you have not come to say thieves attacked you and carted off to the bush with my money?
Mbiame: *(Stretches out his hand holding a wrapping)*. Massa

money said we should give you this paper. We waited for long at Mami Mimbo sir.

Dinka: We look left. We look right. We bend. We wait. We did not see you.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Grabs the envelope, opens, counts its contents and nods).* I want to be alone now. I'll send Ability to pay you. Listen. Do you know the foot trail below the Trapper's palm bush?

Mbiame: Is it the road that twists its buttocks three times like this? *(twisting his buttocks).*

Shey Ghamogha: Meet Ability there at midnight. Go to Mami Mimbo's bar now. Tell Ability to meet me at home right away. *(They nod. As they turn and start to walk away, Shey pulls out a paper and pen from his pocket, scribbles something on the paper, folds it and puts it inside an envelope).*

Enters Ability.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Stretches out his hand to give an envelope containing money to Ability, who stretches his hand to collect while his gluttonous eyes still peep searchingly into Shey's pocket. Ability counts the contents and nods).* Pay Mbiame and Dinka. Fetch Officer Lucas and give his own share. Tell him to contact Barrister Simon. Inform Officer Lucas and Barrister that I will give each of them a piece of that land if I win the case. Tell Inspector Lucas to meet Barrister Johnson after he's talked with Barrister Simon. I want results and not consequences.

Ability: Consider the job done.

Shey Ghamogha: *(Gives another paper to Ability).* This is a description of my house. Give it to Mbiame and Dinka. They will trail you at the foot trail below the Trapper's house in the middle of

the night. I've spoken to them already. I want the Sale Certificate and the tape recorder. Warn those fellows. We don't know them. They don't know us. *(They nod repeatedly and depart in different directions).*

ACT V

Scene I At a Bush Path

Enter Ability and Inspector Lucas

Ability: *(Hands an envelope to Inspector Lucas).* The booty is heavy. Oil Barrister Johnson's lips. She has agreed to give a portion of that land to us if he wins the case.

Inspector Lucas: That's a big contract.

Ability: If the trap fails to catch a rat, it returns the bait to the owner.

Inspector Lucas: *(Withdraws stealthily).*

Enter Mbiame and Dinka

Ability: *(Gives a paper to Mbiame).* Follow every bit of instructions on this paper. You must come back with the Sale Certificate and the tape. Leave no traces but, don't harm her. She is not the target *(they nod)*. I'll wait for you here. *(Mbiame and Dinka leave).*

Shey Ghamogha's Bedroom

(Unidentified masked men storm the room and point a gun at Mrs Ghamogha).

Dinka: Give tape record and self *safiticate!*

Mbiame: Be smart! Or else, I will blow off your skull!
One! Two...

Mrs Ghamogha: *(In a trembling voice.)* Tape recorder, Self-Certificate, t-t-there, handbag, handbag. *(Dinka pulls out a tape recorder and Birth Certificate from the handbag. As the thieves charge out of the room, a paper drops unnoticed from Mbiame's perforated chest pocket. Mrs Ghamogha picks it up shortly after they left).*

At a Bush Path

(Enter Mbiame and Dinka).

- Dinka:** Boss. *(Smiles as he gives Ability the Birth Certificate and the tape recorder).*
- Ability:** *(Pointing at the papers with a small light from his torch lamp).* What's this? Who asked for a Birth Certificate?
- Dinka:** Sorry sir. No vex sir. No vex. What about our labour? *(Mbiame nods).*
- Ability:** Idiots. *(Ability walks away).*
- Mbiame:** *(Snaps his fingers in the air as he speaks).* We shall see.

Scene II

Shelley Hallen Johnson's Chambers

- Barrister Hallen:** *(Looking at the bandage on her face).* Who did this to you?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** My husband did it. *(Barrister Hallen shakes her head).* My husband reported me to the traditional Council.
- Barrister Hallen:** Why?
- Mrs Ghamogha:** For buying land in my name. I was asked to surrender the land to him. I was also attacked at home by masked bandits. Barrister, assist us through the law to recover the land and ensure my security.
- Barrister Hallen:** Your problem truly requires a legal cure. Violators of human rights must feel the crushing weight of justice.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Thank you Barrister Hallen. Do me a favour once more.
- Barrister Hallen:** You may proceed.
- Mrs Ghamogha:** Barrister Hallen, I'll like to win a seat in the Senate

or Parliament. I'm wondering if through that position, I can by any means reclaim my land.

Barrister Hallen: Justice is not for Senators and Parliamentarians alone. Senator or no Senator, you have a legal right to your land.

Mrs Ghamogha: Barrister Hallen, I just felt that a woman must be something extra-ordinary in the legislative machine before she can be heard or given her rights as a human being.

Barrister Hallen: Oh no, no. Mrs Ghamogha, the real problem is that women do not come before the law each time their rights are abused. Take the case of rape for example, women hardly come forward when they are sexually victimised. They don't talk about it. They have been made to see it as a taboo that must never be mentioned. We have hardly registered a case of rape in this law Chamber although I know they occur every day in *Kibaaka*. Women have been made to remain silent in the face of human rights abuses against them.

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Stroke and yet encouraged by Hallen Johnson's knowledge*). Barrister Hallen, I am shocked by your knowledge of our problems as a sex. I was perhaps the latest victim of the crime you just mentioned.

Barrister Hallen. (*Quickly lifting up her head*). What do you mean?

Mrs Ghamogha: (*Bending over the table, she whispers*). I was raped.

Barrister Hallen: What? Raped? When? Where? By who?

Mrs Ghamogha: Barrister please, don't shout. It must not be heard...

Barrister Hallen: Rubbish! This is complicity with rape! And I wouldn't take it! Mrs Ghamogha! You can't be fighting for women's rights and yet cannot speak up! God! By the way, do you have any

suspect?
Mrs Ghamogha: Kilamakwa did it.
Barrister Hallen: Don't worry. I will send out private detectives to write a report against two people. One, Shey Ghamogha for taking hostage your right to property ownership. Two, Kilamakwa, for violating your womanhood. You can then leave the rest to me.
Mrs Ghamogha: Thank you Barrister Hallen. I'll be on my way now.
Barrister Hallen: It's ok. See you later then (*shakes her head*).

Inspector Lucas Comes In

(*Acting on behalf of Shey Ghamogha and Barrister Simon, Inspector Lucas tries to lure Barrister Hallen Johnson into accepting money to trade justice*).

Inspector Lucas: Inspector Lucas. I'd like to see Barrister Hallen Johnson.
Secretary: I'll announce your presence, sir.
(*Withdraws*).

Enters the Secretary

Secretary: Madam, there's someone at the reception to see you.
Barrister Hallen: Tell him to come in.
Secretary: (*Returns to the secretariat*). You may go in, Sir.
Inspector Lucas: (*Opens the door and walks in*). I'm Inspector Lucas.
Barrister Hallen: What can I do for you, sir?
Inspector Lucas: I work with the Judicial Police where Mrs Ghamogha submitted a case file against her husband. She claimed he seized her land certificate. (*Barrister Johnson places a bulging wallet on the table*).
Barrister Hallen: How can I help you?
Inspector Lucas: I'm here on a richly spiced assignment.

Shey Ghamogha and Barrister Simon would like to show you their gratitude.

Barrister Hallen: In recognition of-

Inspector Lucas: (*Cuts in*). Your collaboration!

Barrister Hallen: I don't remember having rendered any service to them.

Inspector Lucas: I'm here on a highly flavored business agenda.

Barrister Hallen: And what are you marketing?

Inspector Lucas: Learned lady; I am aware that you are the Defence Counsel for Mrs. Ghamogha. Twist your defense and your pockets will be pregnant with two hundred thousand francs.

Barrister Hallen: Do you want to buy my conscience?

Inspector Lucas: At an irresistible price.

Barrister Hallen: Officers should be people of good conscience.

Inspector Lucas: This is a juicy negotiation.

Barrister Hallen: With all the pejorative overtones of that shameless phrase, I call your mission a reductive and perverse portrayal of your low sense of integrity and consciousness!

Inspector Lucas: Two hundred and fifty thousand francs. Scratch my back. I scratch your own.

Barrister Hallen: They sent you to the wrong person.

Inspector Lucas: To do the right thing.

Barrister Hallen: My conscience is not a commodity to be traded to the highest bidder.

Inspector Lucas: Three hundred thousand francs.

Barrister Hallen: Justice is priceless.

Inspector Lucas: (*Smiling*). We're ready to step up the amount.

Barrister Hallen: What happened to your professional ethics?

Inspector Lucas: This is an opportunity ethics cannot buy.

Barrister Hallen: Justice cannot be commercialized.

Inspector Lucas: The name of this game is reciprocity. Waging a war on juicy sources of wealth is not the right choice for a Private Lawyer. You're not on Government payroll. Of course, you know how difficult it is to get a Matricule. (*Smiling*). Limit your alert lenses when the agenda of the game is mutual negotiation and exchange.

Barrister Hallen: Trader. Go to the check point and wait for taxi drivers. That is the market where conscience is raised to the inferior rank of a commodity and negotiated following the strict principles of trade by barter.

Inspector Lucas: Consider the consequences of not accepting the deal at all.

Barrister Hallen: Lamé and epileptic threats. Listen. The Court's ruling shall reflect the people whose rights you refuse to recognize.

Inspector Lucas: Have you considered the inevitability of having *Mwerong* to contend with should the court rule in favour of women and the *Come no Go*?

Barrister Hallen: *Mwerong* is just the type of institution I'm looking for.

Inspector Lucas: (*Smiling*). Shey Ghamogha doubles as an institution and as a son of the soil.

Barrister Hallen: The hammer of the law is not lenient to institutions and sons of the soil.

Inspector Lucas: She has the backing of *Mwerong* and the elders. They will do anything they can to destroy you with the potency of their herbs should She fail to grab that land.

Barrister Hallen: I owe them a lesson.

Inspector Lucas: Fight only battles that you can win.

Barrister Hallen: My strength is in my words.

Inspector Lucas: Do not be that ill-advised fly that was buried with the corpse.

Barrister Hallen: Kamangola is a state of law.

Inspector Lucas: Barrister Hallen...

Barrister Hallen: (*Cuts in as he points at the door*). You came in through that door.

Inspector Lucas: To help you.

Barrister Hallen: You have five seconds to leave my office.

Inspector Lucas: If you still insist-

Barrister Hallen: (*Banging her table as she speaks*). Out of my office, now.

Inspector Lucas: (*Places his card on her table*). Call me if you change your mind.

Barrister Hallen: (*Follows him with her eyes as he walks out and shakes her head*). The house has become a cobweb of networks.

Scene III

At the Court of First Instance

(The Presiding Magistrate walks in solemnly).

Court Registrar: Court! *(Everybody stands. The Magistrate sits down. Everybody sits down).*

Presiding Magistrate: *(Reads from a paper).* Shey Ghamogha stands accused by his wife of the following counts of crime: taking hostage his wife's rights to property ownership, illegal possession of a Land Certificate belonging to MANDJARA, wife battering and assault. Paragraph three of the Plaintiff's report states that with the complicity of *Mwerong* and the Elders, Shey Ghamogha threatened to banish his wife from *Kibaaka* land unless she desists from any attempt to repossess the land and its title. Through Shey Ghamogha's influence, the Traditional Court tried and fined Mrs. Ghamogha for illegal possession of land in *Kibaaka*. They also banned the women's group she worked so hard to create, and accorded ownership of the land to Shey. The time table set by MANDJARA for the execution of her projects witnessed some delays as a result of intimidation and also due to the absence of the land title. Kilamakwa also stands accused of raping Mrs. Ghamogha.

Audience: *Heei! (Shey Ghamogha drops his head).*

Presiding Magistrate: Order! Officers! Go and bring Kilamakwa and the other culprit! *(Two Officers storm out of the Court room).* Mrs. Ghamogha may come forward. Court Registrar.

Court Registrar: Mrs. Ghamogha, are you a Christian or a

Moslim?

Mrs. Ghamogha: I am a Christian.

Court Registrar: *(Hands a Bible to Mrs. Ghamogha).* Say after me. I swear to the Almighty God, that the evidence I shall provide, shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Mrs. Ghamogha: I swear to the Almighty God, that the evidence I shall provide, shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Presiding Magistrate: Proceedings may continue with Barrister Hallen.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Thank you, Your Honour. Mrs. Ghamogha, can you describe the relationship that exists between you and your husband?

Mrs. Ghamogha: My Lord, I feel excluded, threatened and insecure. I have no access to my land simply because I am a woman. Everything falls within male prerogatives.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Mrs. Ghamogha, tell this Honourable Court how you acquired the land in question.

Mrs. Ghamogha: My Lord, I bought the land with my money.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: How did you raise the money?

Mrs. Ghamogha: My Lord, I obtained the money through a Funding Award and personal efforts. I am the founder of The MANDJARA Empowerment Foundation for the vulnerable and the minority. Some years ago, an Award for Issues on Gender was launched. I applied for the grant. My project won sponsorship. The money was insufficient to buy the land someone had just advertised for sale. *(The elders cock their heads).* I stepped up the money

through other personal sources.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

What were those personal sources of your income?

Mrs. Ghamogha:

I combed bushes for raffia beetles. I fumbled about into streams stirring mud in ponds just to fish out tadpoles. I rummaged through grass and thorns searching for grasshoppers. I groped in the dark and fingered every hole for crickets. That is how I raised money to complete the total amount charged for the land.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Your Honour, the landed property in question was single-handedly acquired-

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Objection Your Honour. She wasn't single when she acquired the land.

**Presiding Magistrate:
Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Sustained.

Mrs. Ghamogha, do you have a Sale Certificate?

**Mrs. Ghamogha:
Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Yes, my Lord. *(Gives Barrister Hallen a paper).*

(Places the Sale Certificate on the Magistrate's table).
The Sale Certificate is tendered in evidence that the land belongs to my client. That would be all, Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate:

(Briefly looks at the Sale Certificate). Evidence accepted.

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Your Honour. The Sale Certificate is simply a Tenancy Agreement and not a land title! A simple contract about the sale of land does not grant legal ownership to the Plaintiff.

Presiding Magistrate: Arguments convincing. *(Shey Ghamogha nods).*

Counsel for the

Plaintiff: Mrs. Ghamogha, your report states that the disputed land belongs to your Association. Tell this Honourable Court how MANDJARA acquired ownership of that land.

Mrs. Ghamogha: My Lord, my experiences and those of others in similar circumstances pushed me to transfer ownership of my land title to MANDJARA. The procedure is in process.

Counsel for the

Plaintiff: Mrs. Ghamogha, do you have any evidence that the land title in question is now the legitimate property of the women's association?

Mrs. Ghamogha: Yes, my Lord. *(Stretches out her hand and gives the Motion on Notice to the Prosecuting Counsel).* My husband was served a copy of the Motion on Notice.

Counsel for

Plaintiff: Your honour, I tender in evidence the Motion on Notice. *(Puts the document on the Presiding Magistrate's table).*

Presiding Magistrate: *(Scrutinizes the Motion on Notice first, and begins to read out the information on the Sale Certificate).*

Office of Town Planning

Department of Land and Survey.

Kibaaka Division.

10/11.

To the Public:

Previous Status: Sale Certificate

Subject: A Motion on Notice on the Transfer of Rights of Ownership and Possession

This settlement, addressed to the public, is a

contractual agreement on the transfer of the Power of Attorney and Ownership of land from Mrs Ghamogha to the MANDJARA EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION, concluded by the Buyer, her Lawyer; and the Land and Survey Department;

Salesperson /Buyer and Previous Owner: Shey Wirkitum Moutapon...

Elders: *Cbei! (As Shey Wirkitum drops his head, some elders scream; some gape open mouthed while others spread out their hands).*

Presiding Magistrate: I want order in my Honourable Court!
(Continues reading).

Salesperson /Buyer and Previous Owner: Shey Wirkitum Moutapon, native of Kibaaka, Resident at Kibaaka, Holder of ID card No 902938891, issued at *Kibaaka* and Tax Inspector, designated here as: Vendor (Elders shrug).

Nature of the Present Contract: Land Conveyance

Testator: Mrs Ghamogha Maayuh, Native of Kibaaka, Resident at Kibaaka, Holder of ID card No 90 22 23 290, Issued at *Kibaaka* and Human Rights Activist, designated here as: Testator;

And

Present Owner: The MANDJARA Empowerment Foundation, a Non-Governmental Organization, Authorization Nr. 1117/L/FAPP, Kamangola, hereafter called Owner and Possessor.

That in view of the decision of the Buyer/Salesperson and the Present Owner:

The ownership of the stretch of land situated at:

Tobui Street, measuring:

To the East with Rifem 4000m

To the West with Tav Laarsem 4000m

To the North with Rifem 2000m

To the South with Kimbo Moki 2000m

Is according to the Testator:

1. Donated to MANDJARA Empowerment Foundation;
2. That, upon dissolution of MANDJARA Empowerment Foundation, the Possessor restores Possession, Authority, Power and Control of one-third of the Land and its Certificate to charity Organizations: hereby called: Contingent Owners;
3. That while MANDJARA is allowed Possessory and Ownership rights; the assets must remain the property of the said Association;
4. That all the financial proceeds which must be kept in a bank in the name of the present Association shall either be for charity services; or, used to buy a new site for the Displaced, known as *Come no Go*;
5. That by this established decision; part of the land (excluding the area of land which is at the moment hosting some of the projects of the Association, and measuring about two-thirds of the entire land) shall be retained by my children (Bame Ghamogha, Fomu Ghamogha, and Kila Ghamogha) as Owners, when they are mature enough to be independent; (*Shey shakes his head while the audience and elders turn to look at him*)
6. That any benefits, financial or otherwise, that accrue from part of the land to be retained by my children shall take care of my husband, Shey Gheh Ghamogha (*Shey Ghamogha frowns*), as long as he lives;
7. That a portion of land to be allocated to my children will be vested in Barrister Hallen Johnson as Trustee;
8. That the parties concerned: the Owner, Contingent Owners and the Possessor, are bound by the conditions of this agreement never to revoke it;
9. That no member of my family, including my husband or any other interested party, has the right, whatsoever, to do anything on the said land as from today 10/11 without the permission of the present owners. This agreement is binding but can only be signed by the parties concerned upon completion of the procedure for transfer of ownership.

Department of Land and Survey.

Sign:

Salesperson / Buyer and Previous Owner: Shey Wirkitum
Moutapon.

Testator: Mrs Ghamogha
Maayuh.

Owner and Possessor: MANDJARA.

(Shufai Nsaw, Shufai Sarbam, Taa Gheb and Tav Banboye storm out of the Court room rumbling like thunder).

Presiding Magistrate: Order! Barrister Johnson may continue.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Mrs. Ghamogha; can you remember your husband's reaction when he received a copy of this letter?

Mrs. Ghamogha: My Lord, the land certificate disappeared from my hand bag. My husband kept insisting that he owned the land on grounds that he paid a bride price on me. He got me well beaten and threatened me with banishment.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Mrs. Ghamogha, do you have a land title?

Mrs. Ghamogha: Yes, my Lord, but my husband seized it.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: That would be all, Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate: Mrs. Ghamogha may sit down. Shey Ghamogha may take his position in the witness box.

Court Registrar: Shey Ghamogha, are you a Christian or a Muslim?

Shey Ghamogha: I worship the Great Ashoh, the god of our fathers.

Court Registrar: *(Gives Shey Ghamogha a cutlass).* Say after me. I swear by the gods and spirits of my ancestors,

Shey Ghamogha: I swear by the gods and spirits of my ancestors,

Court Registrar: that the evidence I shall provide,

Shey Ghamogha: that the evidence I shall provide,
Court Registrar: shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Shey Ghamogha: shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Counsel for the Defendant: Shey Ghamogha, who is the owner of the disputed land and its land title?

Shey Ghamogha: My Lord, the head of the family owns land. I am the head of my family (*Ability nods*).

Counsel for the Defendant: Your Honour, the land in question belongs to my client by virtue of his position as family head.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Objection Your Honour, Shey Ghamogha is keeping a land title that is not his. He is guilty of theft since the item he is keeping resulted from an act of theft.

Presiding Magistrate: Sustained.

Counsel for the Defendant: Shey Ghamogha; are you legally married to Mrs. Ghamogha?

Shey Ghamogha: Yes my Lord.

Counsel for the Defendant: Do you have any evidence to confirm your claim?

Shey Ghamogha: Yes my Lord. (*Gives a Marriage Certificate and the land title to his Lawyer*).

Counsel for the Defendant: (*Places the documents on the Magistrate's table*). I tender this as evidence, Your Honour. (*The Magistrate examines them briefly*). Your Honour, the Marriage Certificate binds Shey and Mrs. Ghamogha legally as husband and wife. Your Honour, according to section 323 of the penal

code, there is no stealing amongst couples.
(*Shay Ghamogha and Elders nod with broad smiles*).
Your Honour, the assumption of authority
and autonomy of rights of possession over the
land Mrs. Ghamogha is laying claims to has no
legal basis.

Counsel for the

Plaintiff:

Objection Your Honour!

Presiding Magistrate:

Overruled!

Council for the

Plaintiff:

(*Louder*). Your Honour. Stealing is both a legal
and a moral wrong.

Counsel for the

Defendant:

Your Honour. My client has said earlier that in
Kibaaka land, it is the head of the family on
whom ownership of land is bestowed by
tradition.

Counsel for the

Plaintiff:

Your honour. I know not of any lawful
impediment that denies the woman the right
to own land.

Counsel for the

Defendant:

Your Honour, the Traditional Court had
earlier passed judgment on this same case in
favour of my client. Your Honour. The
Plaintiff is simply exhibiting gross ignorance
of the traditional law which denies the woman
the right to landed property.

Counsel for the

Plaintiff:

Your Honour. An action that is traditionally
permissible may be legally unacceptable and
Objectionable.

Counsel for the Defendant: Objection Your Honour. The Law
cannot be the sole yardstick in a trial that
involves two systems of marriages.

Presiding Magistrate: Sustained!

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Your Honour. My learned colleague needs lectures on the differences between legal and mentality barriers.

Counsel for the Defendant: Your Honour. The Penal Code cannot ignore the authority of tradition and the Local Court.

Council for the Plaintiff: Objection Your Honour, there is no legitimate justification for stealing an item placed under the custody of an Association.

Presiding Magistrate: Barrister Hallen is convincing.

Counsel for the Defendant: Barrister Hallen. Does tradition have a right to protect what is its own?

Counsel for the Plaintiff: My client has said the land belongs to her Association.

Counsel for the Defendant: Your Honour. I have a question for my client's wife.

Presiding Magistrate: You may proceed.

Counsel for the Defendant: My dear lady, what names were you given when you were born; that's, precisely before you got married?

Mrs. Ghamogha: My father named me Rifem Mayuuh Savage Sohngon.

Counsel for the Defendant: Your Honour. Let's take a good look at the land title. The names it bears are Savage Ghamogha. Nothing is mentioned about the names she was given at birth. Nothing is revealed about Rifem Mayuuh Savage

Sohngon. Your Honour, Ghamogha is imposingly written out on the land title as her first name. *(Smiles)*. Your Honour, my learned colleague needs to know that if the said land belongs to Shey Ghamogha's legitimate wife, it is incontestably family property and therefore cannot be single-handedly given to any Association.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Objection Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate:
Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Overruled. Anymore cross examinations?

Yes, Your Honour. Shey Ghamogha, was the Traditional Court at the time of pronouncing judgment in your favour aware that the ownership of the said land had been transferred to your wife's Association?

Shey Ghamogha:

My Lord, *Mwerong* decides who owns land. We cannot change tradition. We cannot challenge *Mwerong*.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

This Honourable Court will fine you for contempt of court if you set your own questions and answer again!

Counsel for the Defendant:

(Shouting). This is intimidation intended to extract a false declaration of guilt from my client. Your Honour. There's no case against my client because *Mwerong* is *Kibaaka* Legislative Society and has ruled that a woman cannot buy land in her name.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: The rights of the woman are violated by such an action, Your Honour. *Mwerong* is not the National Assembly. The laws of this nation are voted by the National Assembly

and not by *Mwerong*.

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Objection, Your Honour. The existence of the Law does not in any way stop the existence of customs and folkways (*Shey nods*). Consequently Your Honour, the land is indisputably the property of my client.

Presiding Magistrate:

Sustained. Barrister Hallen, any more cross examination?

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

(*Takes a deep breath*). Your Honour, Shey Ghamogha is arrogating ownership over a land title he wasn't willfully given. He is a thief and should be punished according to the Law of Appropriation and Theft.

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Objection Your Honour, the Marriage Certificate turned in as evidence shows that a bride price was paid on Mrs. Ghamogha. According to the provisions of this Marriage Certificate, Shey and Mrs. Ghamogha are lawfully married. With due respect to traditional law, Your Honour, my submission is that there's no case against my client because in *Kibaaka*, a woman belongs to a man by marriage, and what belongs to her belongs to her husband as well.

Presiding Magistrate:

Sustained.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Your Honour, the same Marriage Certificate was established (*lifts up her finger*) according to the native laws and customs of Mifem-Mikari. Nothing is said about the native customs of *Kibaaka* in the Marriage Certificate. Your Honour. My learned colleague knows very

well that when a custom originates from a particular tribe, its sphere of application is that tribe. What that means, Your Honour, is that my learned colleague and his client are applying *Kibaaka* indigenous laws in a context where that does not apply. Your Honour. The Marriage Certificate remains substantial evidence that Shey Ghamogha knew about the native laws and customs of Mifem-Mikari at the time their marriage was solemnized. That makes him guilty of usurpation, appropriation, misdemeanor and moral racketeering. Besides, Your Honour, my client said earlier that she was given in marriage by her uncle. She's therefore under no contractual obligation to abide by the terms of a marriage agreement that she did not freely consent to.

Presiding Magistrate: Arguments convincing.

(Shey Ghamogha yawns loudly and assumes a steeply slanting position).

Counsel for the Defendant: Your Honour. My client is feeling weak and needs some rest. We wish to apply for suspension of hearing until my client is medically declared fit to appear in court.

Presiding Magistrate: Motion of adjournment granted. This trial is put off pending further notice. Court.
(Everybody rises).

A Few Days Later

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Your Honour. It may be of interest to this case to learn that Inspector Lucas tried without success to persuade me into accepting money to twist my ruling in favour of Shey Ghamogha. *(Inspector Lucas drops his head).*

Elders: *Heeei!*

Presiding Magistrate: I want order in my Court.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Your Honour, when I refused to accept the bribe, he resorted to intimidation and verbal terrorism.

Presiding Magistrate: Inspector Lucas may come forward. (*Inspector Lucas steps forward*). Inspector Lucas, Is that shocking allegation true or false?

Inspector Lucas: False, Your Honour. I want to see corruption kicked out of *Kibaaka*. I can't encourage a practice I'm bent on putting an end to (*Shey and Ability smile simultaneously*).

Presiding Magistrate: Barrister Hallen, do you have any proof of such an alarming and shocking allegation? (*Inspector Lucas, Ability and Shey Ghamogha nod simultaneously*).

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Your Honour, I tender in evidence this tape recorder. (*Places tape recorder on the table. Inspector Lucas shudders with fright and opens his mouth wide*).

Presiding Magistrate: (*Presses a button on the tape recorder. As everybody is listening to the conversation, he searches Inspector Lucas's face for signs of guilt*). Inspector Lucas, nobody is above the law. (*To an Officer*). Bring the Handcuffs, and chain his hands! (*Inspector Lucas's hands are chained*). Barrister Hallen. Anymore cross examination?

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Yes, Your Honour. Shey Ghamogha, look at the bandage on your wife's face. Why did you beat her?

Shey Ghamogha: She provoked me. I was also informed by Ability that she was having an affair with Honourable Wirkitum. (*Honourable Wirkitum, Mrs. Ghamogha and Regular open their mouths wide*

and gawk at Ability who turns his face to the opposite side).

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Shey Ghamogha, do you have any evidence that your wife has an affair with Honourable Shey Wirkitum?

**Shey Ghamogha:
Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Ability suspected them.

Shey Ghamogha, you said your wife provoked you and earned beatings. Tell this honourable court what she said and the signs of provocation in what she said.

Shey Ghamogha:

It was the day my wife visited you. You and my wife accused me of irresponsibility (*Barrister Hallen shakes her head*). When she came back home on that day, she called me a prostitute, and said she does not respect empty titles. Of course, she earned a slap for that.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Your Honour, Mr. Ghamogha and his accomplice Ability, are fanatical liars. They should be punished for complicity, lies telling and wife battering.

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Your Honour. This woman told a lie and sneaked away to join her accomplice- Barrister Hallen, with whom she spent time insulting my client. Your Honour, you will bear with me that such insolent descriptions as 'prostitute', 'irresponsible' and 'empty title' are elements of provocation. Your Honour, her dishonest, and insolent attitude robbed my client of the capacity for self-control. He instantly reacted by beating up his wife.

Besides, Ability caught her with another man. Your Honour, no husband will hear that his wife is cheating on him and holds back his fist (*Ability nods*). That would be all Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate: If Ability is in this court, he should come forward and go inside the witness box. (*Ability takes his position in the witness box and crosses his middle finger over the forefinger*). Court Registrar.

Court Registrar: Ability, are you a Christian or a Moslim?

Ability: None of the above.

Court Registrar: (*Hands a cutlass to Ability*). Say after me. I swear an oath on this cutlass, that the evidence I shall provide, shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Ability: I swear an oath on this cutlass, that the evidence I shall provide, shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Presiding Magistrate: Barrister Hallen may continue with the prosecution.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Thank you, Your Honour. Ability, tell this Honourable Court what you know about the alleged conversation between myself and Mrs. Ghamogha.

Ability: My Lord, what I said was what somebody heard. (*Shey Ghamogha searches Ability's face*).

Council for the Plaintiff: Mr. Ability. The verb "to hear" is a psychic or mental activity. Do you have access to areas of the mind that are not physical? Can you tell this Honourable Court how you were able to know what somebody heard?

Ability: (*Scratching his head with his fingers*). Somebody I met told me that he eavesdropped in a conversation in which the two of you were

insulting Shey. He was in such a hurry that I forgot to ask his name. He wasn't happy telling me what he heard. He assumed and was sure Mrs. Ghamogha had seen him and yet pretended not to notice anything. We discussed only for five seconds, and he raced away because he was avoiding being noticed by Shey Ghamogh's wife. Yes, yes.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Ability:

Ability, describe that person.

My Lord, he was tall, dark, m-m- had small cunning, eyes, m-m- a flat stomach, thick dark hair-yes-yes-; he was wearing a blue check shirt on jeans trousers butchered on the seats, behind (*indicating the buttocks*) yes-; he was wearing a pair of brown sandals. His lips were rough and black. (*Shey Ghamogha shakes his head*). I remember he had em-a round imposing lump on his back, separating his two shoulders; making it difficult for him to stand upright. Yes. He bent the upper half of his body forward. In fact, one could hardly see his face.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Ability. You said your discussion with the anonymous person lasted only five seconds? You equally said he did not expose his face because the hunch on his back has accentuated his stooping posture?

Ability:

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Yes, my Lord.

Ability. Are you aware that in five seconds you were able to observe someone, talk to him and gather details that you have used about five minutes, fifty seconds to reproduce? Are you

aware that your description includes areas of the body you did not even have access to? I'm talking about the face and internal motives. Ability, if the upper half of the stranger's body was bent forward, due to a swelling on his back and a hunched posture, as you claim, how did you see his face? (*Ability drops his head*). Ability, your description leaves one with the impression that you had access to the conscious, the subconscious, the intentional, the unintentional and even the hidden motives of the said person. This is suggested by the use of phrases like "He wasn't happy", "he assumed and was sure", he "pretended", "he was avoiding". Ability, can you see thoughts, moods, intensions and emotions with the eyes? (*Ability is silent*). Ability, in the statement "he raced away because he was avoiding being noticed by Shey's wife"; the phrase "he was avoiding" leaves room for conclusive statements that you had unrestricted access to the stranger's intentions and motives. The further phrase "He assumed and was sure Mrs. Ghamogha had seen him and yet pretended not to notice anything" contains words which again suggest that you had access to the anonymous man's mind, thoughts and intensions. These include words such as "assumed", "sure", "pretended" and "had seen him". The phrase "He wasn't happy" directly describes the person's emotions, state of mind or mood, as well as what he wished for, or did not wish for. Ability, can you deny that your narrative is spiced with linguistic characteristics that are only specific to the

language of feelings and thoughts? (*Ability is silent*). Ability, can you equally deny that your account is characterized by indicators for areas of the mind that eyes cannot reach such as emotions, motives, moods and intentions? (*Ability cocks his head on one side*). Ability. Can you also deny that your description contains markers for states of mind, attitudes, dispositions and moods that only a godlike agent endowed with omniscience abilities can perceive? Your Honour, Ability's testimony is too contradictory to be convincing. From every indication, Your Honour, his allegation that my client is in love with Honourable Shey Wirkitum has no proofs and do not warrant any further investigation (*The women smile*).

Presiding Magistrate: This court session is adjourned.

Later: The Court Session Resumes.

Enter the Police and two others chained.

(They straggle from side to side across the floor).

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Kilamakwa. You were found on the scene of crime the very moment MANDJARA women were attacked and beaten by masked men. What were you doing there?

Kilamakwa: No vex, madam, no vex. It was *Baa* Ability who sent us.

Women: *Heeeeeeeei!*

Presiding Magistrate: I want order in my Court!

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Kilamakwa. Did you rape Mrs. Ghamogha?

Kilamakwa: No vex sir, *Baa* Ability said I should do it.

Counsel for the

Plaintiff: That would be all Your Honour.

Mrs. Ghamogha: My Lord, an anonymous letter dropped from

the pocket of one of the bandits when unmasked men attacked us. *(Shey Ghamogha tilts his head to one side)*. I picked it. *(Gives the letter to Barrister Hallen who in turn gives it to the Presiding Magistrate)*.

Presiding Magistrate: *(Reads out the letter)*: “Give a sum of twenty thousand francs to Mbiame and Dinka. Leave no traces of this letter after reading it” *(The audience scream)*. Order!

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

If Mbiame and Dinka are in court, they should come forward. *(They step forward)*. How old are you?

Mbiame: *(Counts his fingers and speaks)*. Fifteen years.

Dinka: *(Counts his fingers with his mouth and speaks)*. Fourteen.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

What do you know about the missing Birth Certificate and the stolen tape recorder? *(They look at each other)*.

Mbiame: It was Baa Ability who sent us to collect the tape recorder and the Self Certificate.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Ability, what do you know about these accusations?

Ability: My Lord, Shey Ghamogha wanted the Sale Certificate and the tape recorder. He wanted to destroy existing evidence conferring ownership of the disputed land to his wife. He employed me to hire somebody to do the job. *(Mrs. Ghamogha and others watch Shey Ghamogha as he drops his head)*.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Your Honour is a witness to the myriads of evidences tendered in so far. Your Honour,

Decree number 9 of September 18/90/95 grants the woman rights to Property Ownership. Section 343 of the Penal Code punishes any person who facilitates involvement in crime of persons under the age of 18. Ability and Shey Ghamogha are therefore partners in crime. Your Honour. According to sections 229, 270 and 251 of the Penal Code, Shey Ghamogha committed assault and violence by beating his wife. The further elements of assault and violence on his wife include trauma, physical injuries and intimidation. Your Honour, Shey Ghamogha deserves to be prosecuted under section S390 for tribalism, battering and violence.

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Objection Your Honour. My client said earlier that his wife provoked and insulted him. My client was therefore under immediate necessity to defend himself against insult and deter further humiliation. Your Honour. No criminal responsibility can stem from an act that was carried out in self-defence. My client is therefore protected and exonerated by the stipulations of Section 90 on the Law of Self Defense.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

Your Honour. Shey Ghamogha is not the Law.

Presiding Magistrate: Overruled.

**Counsel for the
Plaintiff:**

I wish to remind Your Honour that Shey Ghamogha is charged with theft on three counts of crime; the attempted theft of the

Sale Certificate, the theft of the tape recorder and the land title which he displaced from its original position without the consent of the owner.

**Counsel for the
Defendant:**

Objection Your Honour, taking the land title without the consent of his wife does not make my client a thief. It is the intention that makes one a thief and not the act.

Presiding Magistrate: Convincing.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Your Honour, an item is considered stolen when it is displaced from its original position without the consent of the owner. Secondly, Your Honour, Shey Ghamogha was found in possession of a land title that belongs to his wife's Association. The elements of theft are displacement and deprivation. Furthermore, Shey Ghamogha has declared his intention of perpetually depriving his wife and her group of land they own by rights of acquisition simply because he has the backing of *Mwerong*, tradition and perverse customs. Your Honour, this is a crime of theft and usurpation, punishable under sections 218 No. 72-16 of January 90/29. Your Honour. Shey Ghamogha is also guilty of violence, wife battery and intimidation. He's also guilty of encouraging and facilitating the practice of juvenile delinquency, and of advocating ideas that are pernicious to the welfare of human beings. Your Honour, this culprit like his accomplices should be booked for crimes against his wife, refugees, strangers and society. He's a criminal and deserves a jail sentence!

Counsel for the

Defendant:

Objection Your Honour, in taking the land title, my client was simply discharging traditional duties incumbent on him.

Presiding Magistrate:

Objection sustained.

Counsel for the

Plaintiff:

Your Honour, my able colleague is quite aware of the 1872/90 convention on the elimination of all forms of distinctions, exclusions, and segregations against women. Your Honour, this convention is legally bounded to the principles of the rights of women and must fulfill the obligations for which it was instituted.

Counsel for the

Defendant:

Your Honour, my learned colleague is also aware of the existence of the 1982 Charter on the recognition of Human and People's Rights to self-determination. An obvious interpretation to this clause is that the Charter acknowledges the preservation of culture and tradition. Your Honour, my client has unchallenged rights to matrimonial property. He's therefore right in promoting the orders of *Mwerong* since *Mwerong* represents the Legislative Organ in the context of tradition and custom!

Counsel for the

Plaintiff:

Your Honour, encouraging the preservation of culture and tradition, does not in any way guarantee the practice of discrimination, violence, tribalism, corruption, marginalization and restrictions on the basis of gender, sex and race. Your Honour, my learned colleague

and his client must be cautioned that they're twisting the law to suit tradition.

Counsel for the Defendant:

Your Honour, the two systems of law involved in this trial must be considered.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Your Honour, considering that Shey Ghamogha is judged by legal and not traditional standards, his action of usurping a land title belonging to his wife's Association is enough justification of guilt!

Counsel for the Defendant:

Your Honour, Traditional Law prescribes and encourages the preservation of tradition and custom. My client is therefore protected and vindicated by Traditional Law.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Your Honour, Traditional Law does not determine the criteria for attributing or exonerating guilt in Legal Proceedings.

Counsel for the Defendant:

Your Honour, Mrs. Ghamogha is married in a society that is fenced on all corners by the rigid and impenetrable barriers of tradition and custom. Land acquisition and ownership constitute one of those traditional ordained male domains that say trespassers will be persecuted. Your Honour, mindful of the fact that she is unavoidably governed by the laws of tradition and custom, Mrs. Ghamogha bought land and proceeded to secure a land title in her name. Such an action, Your Honour, is in flagrant violation of Traditional law which exists to guarantee the preservation of ancestral norms. Consequently, in taking

the land title, my client was simply acting in conformity with the powers society bestowed upon him as custodian of ancestral tradition.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Your Honour, the preservation of tradition and custom cannot be a concrete excuse for stepping outside the boundaries of the Law of Acquisition and Ownership.

Counsel for the Defendant:

My client had earlier said he worships the Great Ashoh. What that means, Your Honour, is that his religion is Ancestral Religion. Your Honour, the action of taking the land title should therefore be viewed as a dedication to religion and custom, and a high sense of commitment traceable to the powers bestowed upon my client as Traditional Priest and custodian of tradition and ancestral religion.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Objection, Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate: Sustained.

Counsel for the Defendant: Your Honour, we cannot impose a foreign code of Law in a purely native oriented trial. The code of Law employed in my client's trial should take into consideration his traditional religion and job description; otherwise he risks being condemned for crimes he did not set out to commit.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

Your client is guilty by Legal standards.

Counsel for the Defendant:

No law is superior to another, Your Honour.

Counsel for the Plaintiff:

The standards of judgment we are applying in

this case are those prescribed by laureates for Red Feathers and their tradition that is grounded on greed, pride and the race for Red Feathers. Your Honour, Shey Ghamogha should return the land title to his wife because it belongs to MANDJARA, an Association she represents.

Counsel for the

Defendant:

Objection Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate:

Objection overruled.

Counsel for the

Defendant:

Your Honour, I hold society strongly responsible for the action and reaction of my client. If he must be punished, society must also be punished for assigning unto an individual a job description that violates Legal ethics.

Counsel for the Plaintiff: Ignorance of the Law is not an excuse, Your Honour.

Presiding Magistrate:

Order! This session is adjourned for now. Court! *(Everybody rises. The magistrates and judges withdraw to one room where they discuss for a while. They return to the court room. The Court Registrar gives instructions).*

Court Registrar:

Court! *(Everybody rises.)*

Presiding Magistrate:

We have all listened to submissions from both the Defendant and the Accused. The Plaintiff, Mrs. Ghamogha sued her husband, Shey Ghamogha for the following offenses against her: arrogation of land ownership; unlawful possession of a land title belonging to MANDJARA and the use of violence and intimidation against her person. The Accused connived with Ability, Mbiame and Dinka to steal the tape recorder and the Sale Certificate.

The Defendant has been served with a Motion on Notice stating that administrative procedure to transfer ownership of the land title to The MANDJARA was in progress. Despite the Motion on Notice forbidding any form of infringement, the Defendant refused to adhere to the injunction. From his tribal sentiments, the Defendant has consistently threatened his wife with eviction. In view of the strong evidence of guilt and crime presented before this court, I hand down the following verdict. The Accused is found guilty of unlawful possession, tribalism, human rights abuse, gender discrimination, violence against women and complicity in robbery, bribery and corruption (*the audience scream*). Order! Since the Association's property is not matrimonial property, the Accused will have to pay a fine of FCFA200.000 to MANDJARA. This court further rules that the land title which is now in the court's possession be returned to the rightful owner with immediate effect! Shey Ghamogha, exposure to tradition should not make us too traditional and one-sided because we live in an evolving society and should be receptive to changes. Women have a right to property ownership including land. Like all human beings, they have a right to choose where to live. On the count of violence and complicity in crime, Shey Ghamogha will be kept in Police detention for nine months (*Mrs. Ghamogha shrugs*). Ability, you are found guilty of connivance, extortion, inducement, complicity, bribery and corruption, and, for

bearing false witness in this honourable Court. You are hereby sentenced to five years imprisonment with hard labour! (*Honourable Shey Wirkitum stifles a smile*). In addition to his prison term, Ability will pay a fine of 400.000frs. Inspector Lucas is stripped off his duties and prohibited from serving in the Police Force on charges of complicity, bribery and corruption. In addition, he is condemned to a prison term of two years. Mbiame and Dinka are found guilty of complicity and burglary. As minors, they are subjected to punishment with isolation in the Reformation Centre where they are expected to be rehabilitated. A corresponding fine of FCFA35.000 each may be paid to secure their freedom after ten months in the Reformatory. Some culprits have been perpetuating violence on the strangers in the name of Vigilante Group. The malicious gang is hereby disbanded and its members handed over to the law for appropriate legal sanctions. Kilamakwa, the Vigilante boys, Shey Ghamogha and Ability are again implicated in this other count, and will be tried when the case comes up. In addition, Kilamakwa earns a sixteen-year jail sentence for committing rape. People of *Kibaaka*, learn to love the *Come no Gos*. Marriage is a family issue. You now have children who speak different languages. Our differences should unite us more than they separate us. This is the court's ruling. Court! (*The Officers chain Shey Ghamogha, Ability, Inspector Lucas, Mbiame, Dinka, Kilamakwa and the other culprits, and lead them to a car outside the*

courtroom for onward transfer to the Detention Unit. Everybody stands up and begins to file out. Outside the court room, Mrs. Ghamogha follows the convicts, screaming. As her eyes meet her husband's, she pulls herself out of the crowd of women trying to comfort her, and follows and screams after Barrister Hallen Shelley Johnson).

Mrs. Ghamogha:

(Crying and crouching). Barrister Johnson. It is our land that I wanted. I came here to say that something is wrong. I didn't come here to imprison my marriage. If you keep my husband behind the bars; you keep my marriage behind the bars. I will pay the fine for my husband. Help me process the bail, please. Do something to secure his bail and freedom. I will pay the bail. I will pay the charges. I want to keep my marriage. I have children. Release my marriage, please. I beg you. Release my marriage.

(Curtains)

POSTSCRIPTS

Lola's *The Lock on My Lips* is a brilliant meditation on the ambiguity of land ownership in contemporary Cameroon. In it, Lola uses the simple metaphor of a family misunderstanding over a piece of land to explore the broader disturbing subject of land tenure in the Cameroon nation state. The author opts for legality where the "woman" gets back her piece of land. The suggestibility of the allegorical perspective which goes far beyond the feminist literary posturing is evident to those who are familiar with the history of Cameroon since its conquest till date. Indeed, *The Lock on My Lips* is a great contribution to the development of the concept of national literatures in Cameroon.

Dr MOBA Jesse
Senior Lecturer of African Literature
University of Douala

"Some people are brave and famous in their emptiness. I celebrate achievements and not titles." *The Lock on My Lips* by Dr. Perpetua Lola Nkamanyang stars a woman whose land and rights are seized because she's a woman. The shooting, sometimes mortal wit on which the story hangs its imagery announces, even celebrates and sustains the conflict, suspense and tension born of the stark differences in the couple. The hate of colonisation and its disintegrating effects on a people, the responsibility of the colonialist and their progeny as well as that of the post-colonial subjects for the destruction of the environment and their society, the blowing out, the degeneration and fall into disease and death of families due to sexual promiscuity, lack of parental care and education; the education of the girl child and woman and the objection to it... are undertones that animate the fight for the ownership of a piece of land and its land title that only the court can solve fairly. This play is an incredible contribution to the students of literary studies both in Secondary

Schools and University Institutions offering courses in the area of Feminism and Post-colonial Studies as a whole.

FONYUY MUSA WIRTUM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

NNAMBS PUBLISHERS, Douala

Perpetua Lola's *The Lock on my Lips* revolves on three key concepts in Gender Studies: 'Androcentricism', 'citizenship' and 'Consciousness Raising'. 'Citizenship' and the civil rights that go with it is gendered in two ways: men have a fuller and/or different range of rights and obligations than women — the right to justice (denied the woman [Mrs. Ghamogha] in our traditional courts); the right to freedom of speech and thought, (metaphorized in the 'lock' on her lips); and the right to own property (symbolized in the play by 'Land'). The play springs from the Postmodernist and Postructuralist theoretical backgrounds that dissolve the dichotomy between 'Men' and 'Women' and expose the idea of 'man' and/or 'woman' as discrete and unitary categories as a cultural construction achieved through cultural discourse rather than being 'real' entities; a view that is strongly articulated by Lola's heroine, Mrs. Ghamogha in the mirror episode of the traditional Court scene. Lola's handling of gender inequalities in *The Lock on my Lips* goes beyond the restrictive scope of "Women Studies" and feminist struggles which simply amount to 'adding women in' rather than recognizing that like women, men too are gendered beings. Recognizing that men too are gendered beings, Perpetua Nkamanyang Lola also shows gendered citizenship operating to include/exclude men on the basis of ethnicity and/or nationality. Lola has fully experimented in the stream of consciousness and surrealist techniques, but her major strength lies in the even-handed handling of the central gender conflict between men/ women or husband/wife. Mrs. Ghamogha must have her civil rights as well as maintain her marriage. Lola's groundbreaking work on gender is a significant contribution to Cameroon Literature and theatre. Although Gender Studies has been

a vibrant and productive area of research in Europe and America for decades, Cameroon dramatists have hardly ventured into this territory. Perpetua Nkamanyang Lola has left a footprint for us to follow.

Dr. NFORBIN GERALD NIBA
Lecturer of English Literary and Cultural Studies
University of Douala

"A gripping and mind blowing feminist play with women battling against an oppressive African tradition that refuses to recognise that women could be equal to or better than men in terms of capacity. A play that seeks to balance, albeit with little success tradition and women's (auto) empowerment. The author has succeeded in capturing the battles of many African women with characters such as the women she presents in the play. Even when tradition oppresses, women have pockets of justice they can explore and exploit by riveting to the state judicial system which exonerates them from the injustices of tradition. Nkamanyang has shown that women's battles have a future and are worth fighting for."

PROFESSOR LILIAN LEM ATANGA, AUTHOR OF LANGUAGE, GENDER AND POWER IN THE CAMEROONIAN PARLIAMENT

"Lola Nkamanyang has fully experimented in the stream of consciousness and surrealist techniques, but her major strength lies in the even-handed handling of the central gender conflict between men and women, husbands and wives. Mrs. Ghamogha must have her civil rights as well as maintain her marriage. Lola's ground-breaking work on gender is a significant contribution to Cameroon Literature and theatre."

DR. GERALD NIBA NFORBIN, LECTURER OF ENGLISH LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF DOUALA

The Lock on My Lips foregrounds gender, narrative and identity in its representations. It tells the story of a woman who defies traditional patriarchal boundaries that deny women their rights, most especially the right to landed property and buys land in her name. Discursive constructions, 'travelling concepts', metaphors, multiple perspectives, narrative, imagery, folklore, anthropological objects, and mixed-genre plot structure (narrative-(poetic)-drama), combine to tell the story of gendered beings and thus pave the way for exploring the interdisciplinary potentials of the play-text. Land and genre are gender markers. Land is definable through power and authority, constitutes the material with which masculinities are constructed, and thus becomes a space where women are excluded. The play equates land with patriarchal ideology of male virility and supremacy, but creates a mixed-genre fragmentary structure to disrupt the very patriarchal power erected through the metaphor of land.

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